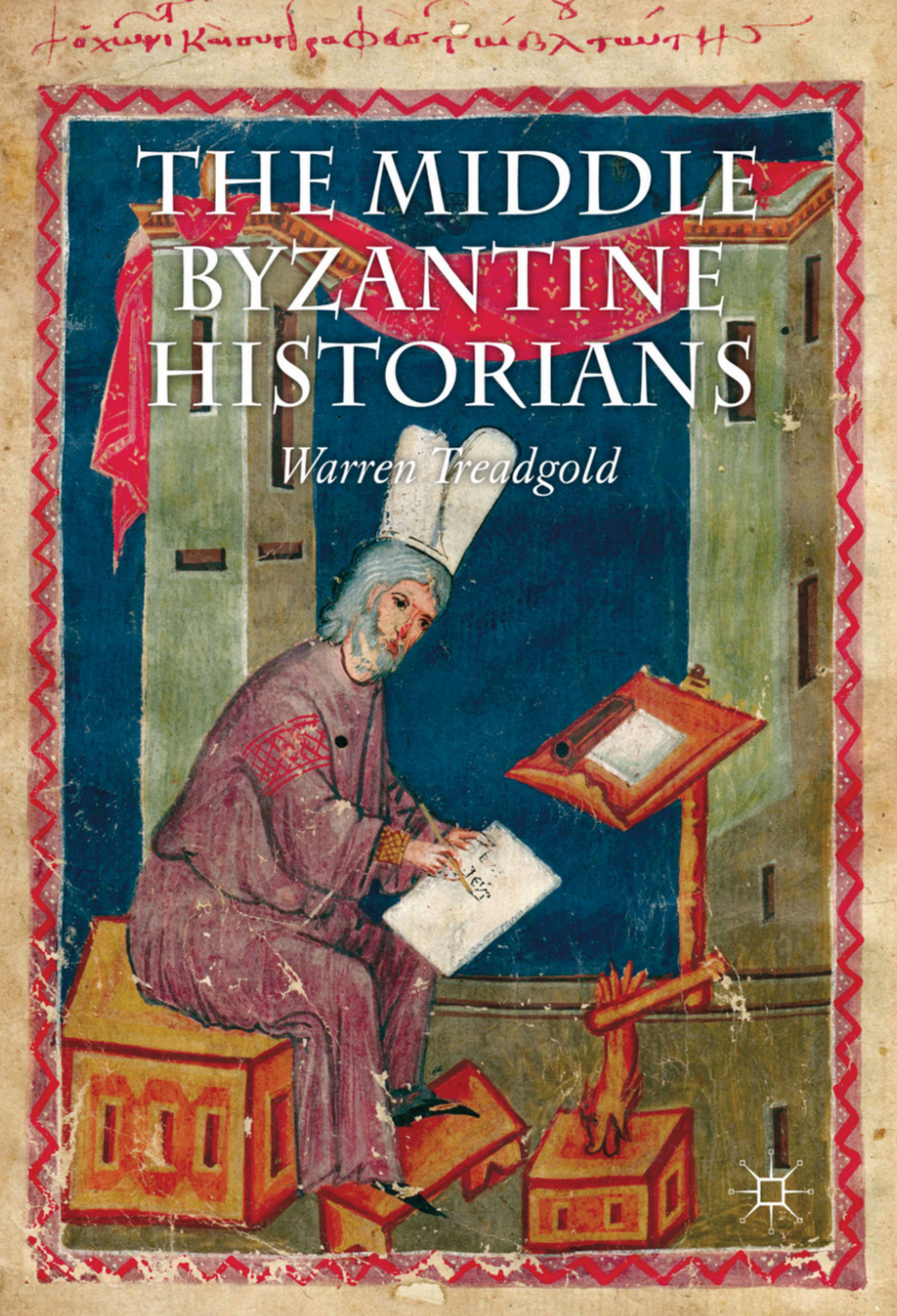
THE MIDDLE BYZANTINE HISTORIANS

Warren Treadgold



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The Middle Byzantine Historians

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For Cyril Mango,
the greatest of several great Byzantinists I have known

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Preface

This book, the second of three projected studies of the Byzantine historians from Eusebius of Caesarea through the fifteenth century, is of a sort that has become unusual.[1] Today the standard practice is for studies of ancient or Byzantine authors to appear in separate articles or books, which are then summarized in handbooks, usually by a group of scholars. Such handbooks, which tend to be judged mostly by the completeness of their bibliographical references, seldom try to correct earlier mistakes, to reconcile existing inconsistencies, or to arrive at overall conclusions. Here my purpose is different: to study all the Byzantine histories themselves, to correct as many mistakes and to reconcile as many inconsistencies in the secondary literature as I can, and to arrive at some general conclusions and observations about Byzantine historiography. I try to put the historians into their historical and literary contexts, to summarize what we can know about them, to describe what they tell us and how they tell it, and to evaluate their works both as history and as literature. This is, therefore, not a handbook meant to summarize previous studies in order to prepare for future studies, but an attempt to study the historians here and now.

Accordingly I refer only to the secondary literature that I have found useful for my purposes and omit the rest. (Naturally I also omit publications that had not reached me when I finished writing, in 2012.) Readers may call this book a monograph if they find that term suitable for a book on forty-odd writers spanning six centuries. Since the word "polygraph" means something else, I would rather call the book a comprehensive study. I try to alert the reader whenever I think previous scholarship is mistaken and to explain why I think so. I have, however, avoided lengthy summarizing of opinions that I consider mistaken, especially when they are based on misunderstandings or errors already identified by previous scholarship. A prudent colleague of mine in another field recently rejected an offer to write a general history because it would force him to take positions on controversial questions that would offend other scholars no matter what he said. I can confirm from experience that what many scholars want is agreement with their own work—certainly not a detailed refutation of it—and since they disagree with each other, some will be dissatisfied with any general treatment.[2] This is probably one reason few books like the present one are written any longer.

[1] Its predecessor is Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, and its successor, *The Later Byzantine Historians*, should follow in due course.

[2] Some have been particularly upset by the demonstration in Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 311–29, that neither John Malalas nor John of Antioch copied the other but that both copied Eustathius of Epiphania. Since no one has offered any refutation of this view, the main objection seems to be that it disagrees with all the positions taken by previous scholars (although it agrees with their refutations of each other). Recently Van Nuffelen,

We know middle Byzantine historiography less well than early Byzantine historiography, chiefly because fewer modern scholars have studied the later historians. For example, we have no published collection of fragments of Byzantine historians after the sixth century, even though more than a dozen middle Byzantine histories survive only in fragments, usually paraphrased in later histories. Fragmentary middle Byzantine historians like Trajan the Patrician, Sergius Confessor, or Nicetas the Paphlagonian have attracted far less scholarly interest than fragmentary early Byzantine historians like Eunapius, Philostorgius, or Priscus. Among major historians whose works survive intact, Michael Psellus, Anna Comnena, and Nicetas Choniates in the middle period have been studied much less than Eusebius, Ammianus, and Procopius in the early period.

Every good modern edition of a Byzantine historical work lists in its textual apparatus parallel passages in other Byzantine histories. Just as determining which manuscripts depended on other manuscripts is the responsibility of an editor, explaining which historians depended on others is the responsibility of any scholar who traces the development of Byzantine historiography. Whenever two historical texts resemble each other closely (unless their only resemblance is that they record the same events), one of them must somehow depend on the other. If one surviving history cannot derive directly from another surviving history, we must postulate a lost source, just as we must postulate a lost manuscript if one surviving manuscript cannot derive directly from another surviving manuscript. Any thorough study of the middle Byzantine historians must therefore reckon with the existence of historians whose works are now lost, even if their identities may be difficult or impossible to determine.

Some modern scholars who have treated Byzantine historians as if their works were entirely original may be dismayed by my attribution of much of those works to lost sources. Yet most Byzantine historians prided themselves on repeating their sources faithfully for any events outside their personal knowledge, which of course included every event that no contemporary could remember. For example, though many modern scholars have persisted in treating the *Chronography* of Theophanes Confessor as if its accounts of events from 284 to 813 were mostly composed by Theophanes, Theophanes himself claims that he added to his sources "nothing of my own." Large parts of his *Chronography* are demonstrably summarized from extant texts; most of it records events from long before Theophanes was born; and we have good reasons to think that even its record of contemporary events was the work of Theophanes' friend George Syncellus.[3] While Theophanes inevitably

"John," p. 441 n. 20, has implied that the problem is unsolvable in principle. Croke, Review of Treadgold, p. 134, merely repeats several of my remarks with outrage (e.g., "Malalas is intemperately dismissed as a 'fraud' … and a 'charlatan'"), without trying to refute my argument that Malalas fabricated sources and historical events to conceal that he had plagiarized Eustathius. Here the implication seems to be that even the strongest arguments are inadmissible if they are uncomplimentary to a Byzantine author.

[3] See Ljubarskij et al., "*Quellenforschung*," especially p. 10, where Ljubarskij notes with disapproval that "hypercritism among modern scholars has resulted in the rejection of the authorship of some Byzantine writers. A significant example is Cyril Mango's idea that the

shaped his material by what he included or omitted, most of the time he seems to have followed the opinions of his sources.[4]

Modern eagerness to praise Byzantine texts and reluctance to criticize them has sometimes amounted to a renunciation of critical judgment.[5] As it happens, the Byzantines wrote several excellent histories, many competent ones, and only a few truly bad ones; but all authors and scholars have their faults. While Byzantine historians should not be criticized for not doing things that they never meant to do, such as formulating a comprehensive philosophy of history, almost all of them meant (or at least said they meant) to report past events accurately, impartially, and intelligently in works that would have literary value. Sometimes they criticized each other or even themselves for doing these things inadequately. We too should feel free to criticize them when they fell short of what they were trying to do.

Besides being readier to criticize Byzantine historians, I differ with some modern scholars in several main ways. First, many scholars seem to think that it is somehow safer or more cautious to postulate multiple texts or authors than to postulate only one. For example, some scholars prefer to believe in two extremely similar histories of the late eighth and early ninth century rather than to identify Sergius Confessor with the so-called *Scriptor Incertus*. Others would rather believe that as many as three very similar lost histories were written around the year 921 instead of a single lost history by Nicetas the Paphlagonian. Still others have resorted to far-fetched conjectures rather than admit that the historian Symeon the Logothete was the same man as Symeon Metaphrastes.[6] Yet to postulate several texts or authors needlessly is actually less cautious than to postulate one text. It is simply a refusal to use Ockham's razor.

real author of Theophanes Confessor's *Chronography* was George Synkellos." Cf. my criticism in Ljubarskij et al., "*Quellenforschung*," p. 58, of merely "invoking respect for 'the author.' After all, why should we have more respect for Theophanes than for George?"

[4] For example, Ferber, "Theophanes' Account," argues that Theophanes himself formed the judgment that the emperor Heraclius suffered military defeats in the latter part of his reign as divine punishment for his Monotheletism, so that Theophanes altered the chronology of events in order to demonstrate this. As Scott, "Events," p. 52 n. 8, remarks, "[Ferber's] article is cited by both Ljubarskij and Kazhdan … in support of Theophanes' literary qualities." I would rather attribute both the interpretation and the chronology to Theophanes' lost source, Trajan the Patrician. (See below, pp. 8–17.) Any argument to the contrary would require a demonstration that Theophanes manipulates some of his surviving sources in this way.

[5] Going even farther than Ljubarskij, Dmitry Afinogenov insists in Ljubarskij et al., "*Quellenforschung*," p. 23, "To put it bluntly, nobody should devote himself to serious literary analysis of Byzantine texts unless he or she *enjoys* them as pieces of art." Cf. my remark in Ljubarskij et al., "*Quellenforschung*," p. 60: "We can only make a convincing case for Byzantine authors if we also feel free to criticize them when they deserve it." Laudably if somewhat apologetically, Scott, "Events," p. 50, admits, "I am not able to … describe Theophanes as a great writer or even a moderately significant thinker. He simply was not a great writer or thinker."

[6] See below, pp. 90–100 (Sergius Confessor), 134–52 (Nicetas the Paphlagonian), 203–9 (Symeon the Logothete).

Second, several scholars prefer to assume that the lost sources of historians like Nicephorus and Theophanes or Genesius and the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* were not other histories but "dossiers" of loose notes that were somehow transmitted from historian to historian.[7] While some Byzantine anthologies and collections of excerpts have reached us, as far as I know not a single "dossier" from the Byzantine period either survives in manuscript or is even attested. The Byzantines had no word for "dossier" and are unlikely to have kept anything of the sort, because their parchment and paper were too expensive, and their wax tablets too small, to use for rough notes of any length. If a Byzantine went to the trouble and expense of combining material from several sources on parchment, he called it a chronicle, even if it was as disorganized as the chronicle of George Syncellus or as short as the chronicle of Peter of Alexandria. Until an actual Byzantine historical "dossier" is discovered, to conjecture the existence of such a thing seems to me needless and baseless speculation.

Another sort of text that has sometimes been hypothesized on the basis of inadequate or illusory evidence is the "biography," "pamphlet," or "family chronicle" of some private person or persons.[8] Few Byzantine biographies exist even of emperors—in the middle period only the *Life of Basil*, on Basil I, is better described as an imperial biography than as a general history of an emperor's reign—and I argue here that the only apparent reference to a "history" of a man who was not an emperor is based on a misunderstanding.[9] In fact, not a single historical biography of someone who was neither an emperor nor a saint is credibly attested, much less preserved, from the whole Byzantine period. The evidence that has been adduced for such biographies can be more plausibly explained as coming from oral sources, to which Byzantine historians frequently refer, or from funeral orations, of which a number survive from the middle Byzantine period.

Another way in which I differ with some modern historians is that I have less to say about ideology and mentalities. Most Byzantine historians did have an ideology: conventional but sincere orthodox Christianity, with a corresponding view of the imperial office and church hierarchy as divinely ordained. Many of them disliked or even detested some of their individual emperors and patriarchs, but without questioning the basic Byzantine religious and political system. A few of the historians do seem on rare occasions to imply doubts about that system, but in my opinion their doubts were more apparent than real, a rhetorical device for criticizing their contemporaries by invoking the virtues of the Roman Republic, which obviously could not have been reconstituted in Byzantine times.[10] Byzantines

[7] For theories of "dossiers," see below, pp. 29 and n. 114 (Nicephorus and Theophanes), 55 and n. 75 (George Syncellus and his Syriac sources), and 138 n. 53 (Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus*).

[8] For examples of such hypotheses, see below, pp. 198 and n. 3 (a supposed biography of the general John Curcuas), 264 and n. 160 (a hypothetical biography of the general Catacalon Cecaumenus), and 350 and n. 41 (a hypothetical biography of the Caesar John Ducas).

[9] See below, pp. 197–99 (on the supposed biography of Curcuas).

[10] See below, pp. 286 (on Michael Psellus) and 324 and n. 61 (on Michael Attaliates).

could hope for the overthrow of the current emperor but not of government by emperors.

Since the Byzantine historians supply us with few details about themselves or their working methods, we must often choose between saying nothing about them and guessing. My assumption has been that readers are better served by being told my best guess on the basis of all the evidence than by simply being told that we know nothing for certain. Those readers should, however, realize that such words as "probably," "perhaps," and "approximately" in my text and notes really do mean that the statements they qualify are in varying degrees uncertain. With so much work remaining to be done on Byzantine history, literature, and historiography, we should always be ready to revise our opinions in the light of new evidence, and I have changed my own mind many times while researching and writing this book. Since I have, however, tried not to speculate when we have no reasonable basis for conjecture, readers may find that some of the historians whom I have tried to bring back from the dead look rather spectral. Yet I hope that drawing even shadowy portraits of them will help to clarify the development of Byzantine historiography.

Whenever possible, as in my *Early Byzantine Historians*, I cite Byzantine texts by standard book, section, and paragraph numbers, which should ideally be the same in all editions, translations, and secondary works. Unfortunately, many Byzantinists still cite texts by the page numbers of the most recent editions. Even worse, some editors still publish Byzantine texts without numbering their books, chapters, and paragraphs continuously, and in these cases I have had no choice but to use page numbers. This is one of several respects in which Byzantinists should follow the example of classicists, recognizing that Byzantine literature was continuous with classical Greek literature and constantly drew upon it. While I follow classicists' traditional practice of Latinizing or Anglicizing Byzantine names and titles, I see little harm in the current fashion for transliterating names and titles on the basis of reconstructed ancient Greek pronunciation, so long as everyone realizes that no Byzantine ever pronounced Greek in such a way and that no system of transliteration is ideal.[11]

Although I have sought no financial support for this particular volume other than a sabbatical from Saint Louis University, I remain grateful for the grants I received from the National Endowment for the Humanities and from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars to begin my whole project on the Byzantine historians. Cyril Mango, to whom this volume is dedicated, and Anthony Kaldellis have both read much of my text and made very useful suggestions and corrections. I have received other helpful advice from John Barker, James Howard-Johnston, Elizabeth Jeffreys, Athanasios Markopoulos, Roger Scott, and the late Ihor Ševčenko. My thanks go also to the staff of Saint Louis University's Pius XII Memorial Library, especially to its Interlibrary Loan

[11] Byzantine pronunciation was very close to that of Modern Greek. See my "Note on Transliteration" in Treadgold, *History*, pp. xxi–xxiii.

department, who have helped me obtain many obscure items. My further thanks go to my cartographer, Alan Whitaker, for his elegant work on the maps, not just for this volume but for my *Early Byzantine Historians* as well. For years one of my greatest pleasures in finishing books has been the chance to collaborate with my longtime editor, Paul Psoinos, who has done his usual excellent work on this one. My best thanks go to him and to my editors at Palgrave Macmillan for making special efforts to produce an unconventional book.

Saint Louis
September 2012



Map 1 The eastern Mediterranean in middle Byzantine times



The Eastern Mediterranean in Middle Byzantine Times

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1
The Dark Age

No contemporary Byzantine historian recorded the empire's seventh-century crisis. The reason was not simply that Byzantine readers were few, because Byzantines wrote a number of sermons, saints' lives, and theological works during this time.[1] The reason was not even that a history of these years would have been unpleasant to read, because the empire's surviving so many calamities was actually a remarkable achievement. Unresolved crises, however, have always caused problems for contemporary historians. As long as the Byzantines were unsure whether their empire would prosper or founder, they were unable to decide whether to celebrate its merits or to decry the sins for which God had punished it. As long as they harbored similar doubts about their current emperor's ultimate success, they were unsure whether to praise or condemn him. If they wrote about the contemporary Church without knowing which of two rival doctrines would prevail, they feared that they might be unintentionally endorsing a heresy or denouncing saints. Most actual or potential historians therefore preferred to postpone writing about a war until it was over, about an emperor until he died, or about a disputed doctrine until an ecumenical council had taken a clear position on it.

From about 634 to 718, no historian could be quite sure whether the empire would win its conflict with the Arabs or even survive it. Another complication was Monotheletism, the doctrine that Christ had one will but two natures, a compromise between the Chalcedonian insistence on two natures and the Monophysite insistence on one. First introduced in 633 in the somewhat different form of Monoenergism, Monotheletism was condemned by an ecumenical council only in 681, and even so was revived between 711 and 713. Further complications for contemporary historians included the seven revolutions between 695 and 717 that overthrew six emperors, one of them twice, putting the durability of each new emperor in increasing doubt. All these uncertainties help to explain why

[1] See Chrysos, "Illuminating," and Kazhdan, *History* I, pp. 19–54—who, however, diagnoses an "historiographical fatigue" in this period that he never clearly explains and that I do not see. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, demonstrates that despite the scarcity of contemporary Byzantine histories the seventh century was not in general a time of particularly bad sources. (Cf. my comments in Treadgold, "Darkness.")

we know no names of Byzantine historians who wrote from about 631, when Theophylact Simocatta completed his *Ecumenical History*, to about 720, when Trajan the Patrician apparently finished his *Concise Chronicle*.[2]

The uncertainties Byzantines felt during this period mattered less to Christians in Arab-held Egypt, Syria, and Armenia, where some historians continued to write. There Muslim rule soon became a fact for the foreseeable future, ensuring the survival of Monophysitism and Monotheletism even if they disappeared within the empire. Although no Eastern Christian could be pleased by the persistence of these doctrinal disputes, Monophysites could at least draw the lesson that God had permitted the Muslim conquest in order to punish the emperors who opposed Monophysitism. The Monophysite Egyptian historian Bishop John of Nikiu said as much in his Coptic world chronicle around 660, perhaps drawing on another Monophysite Egyptian historian, who wrote as early as 643.[3] Syrians of various religious views wrote short contemporary chronicles as early as 640.[4] Two Armenian historians wrote more detailed accounts of the seventh century around 661 and 682, even though the Byzantines continued to contest Armenia with the Arabs.[5] Yet these historians wrote in Coptic, Syriac, or Armenian, not in Greek.[6]

[2] Kazhdan, *History* I, pp. 19–20, lists four "doubtful or insignificant" historians who may belong to this period. One is Trajan. Two more, Hippolytus of Thebes, who wrote on biblical events, and Theophanius, who wrote on the ages of man, seem not to have been historians in any conventional sense of that term. Kazhdan's fourth historian, the "Great Chronographer" (or rather the author of the *Great Chronography*), wrote later than Trajan (as Kazhdan realized); see below, pp. 31–35.

[3] Chapters 121 and 122 of John of Nikiu's *Chronicle* seem to have been written during the lifetimes of the Arab governor ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ (d. 663) and the Monophysite patriarch Benjamin (d. 665), though John is first attested as a bishop in 686 and was still alive c. 700. (See Carile, "Giovanni," pp. 356–59.) See also Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 181–89, and Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 152–56. Since John is well informed about events in both Constantinople and Alexandria and the connections between them from about 602 until his chronicle ends with 643, he probably drew on a history written in Alexandria soon after 643 by a Monophysite merchant or official in close touch with Constantinople. Since this history was presumably intended for an Egyptian Monophysite readership, it seems more likely to have been written in Coptic than in Greek.

[4] See Palmer, *Seventh Century*, pp. 5–12, and Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 118–20, referring to a chronicle finished around 640 that they attribute to Thomas the Priest; Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 59–66, expressing doubt about the attribution, calls the same text a "Chronicle to 636" preserved indirectly in a later "Chronicle to 724." As of this writing, I have not seen Muriel Debié's *Writing of History in the Eastern Christian Worlds, 300–1500* (Ashgate, 2013).

[5] See Howard-Johnston, "Armenian Historians" and *Witnesses*, pp. 70–102 ("Pseudo-Sebeos," who finished writing around 661; but cf. Thomson and Howard-Johnston, *Armenian History* I, pp. xxxiii–xxxix) and 103–28 (the "History to 682," indirectly preserved in the *History of Albania* compiled by Movses Daskhurantsʿi in the 990's).

[6] We have only an Ethiopic translation of an Arabic translation of John of Nikiu's *Chronicle*, but the widely repeated theory that the original was written partly in Coptic and partly in Greek (see Charles, *Chronicle*, p. iv, and Carile, "Giovanni," p. 360) seems extremely unlikely, since such a mixture of languages would be almost unparalleled anywhere, while signs of a Greek original are only to be expected in a text that John took mostly from the

No Egyptian, Syrian, or Armenian historians wrote for a Byzantine readership, and after the Arab conquest of their homelands none of them took much interest in internal Byzantine history, which from their point of view was the history of a foreign power.

History without historians

Nevertheless, even before disciplines like archeology, sigillography, and numismatics were developed in modern times to exploit nonliterary sources, historians of the conventional type were not absolutely essential for preserving an historical record. Other kinds of writers recorded historical material, which could be used later by regular historians, whether Byzantine or not. Government reports, state documents, official orations, acts of church councils, sermons, theological tracts, and saints' lives could all include accounts of historical events, even if none of those texts could properly be considered a history. Moreover, a writer who jotted down a brief, informal, and anonymous continuation of someone else's chronicle, like the continuer of the sixth-century *Chronicle* of Count Marcellinus, could compose history of a sort without claiming to be an historian in the full sense of the word.[7]

On the other hand, when a lost text was used as a source by a later historian who may well have abridged and adapted it, we should at least entertain the possibility that the original source was a history of the usual kind. The most likely candidate for such a work during this period is the source of the *Concise History* of Nicephorus for the years from 610 to 641. This source appears to have been a continuation of the *Chronological History* of John of Antioch, which concluded with 610. The author of this continuation finished writing no earlier than 645, because he refers to an event that happened in that year; but we have no reason to date him much later. He was evidently a knowledgeable resident of Constantinople who sympathized with the Monothelete heresy that at the time enjoyed some favor from the emperor Constans II.[8]

Greek of John Malalas. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 184–85, Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, p. 152, and Leslie MacCoull (according to a private communication) also believe that John of Nikiu wrote only in Coptic.

[7] On the continuer of Marcellinus, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 234–35.

[8] On this source, see Mango, *Nikephoros*, pp. 12–14, Treadgold, "Trajan," pp. 598–99, and especially Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 244–56. Though Mango, *Nikephoros*, p. 14, suggests that the reference to the disputation between Pyrrhus and Maximus in July 645 could have been "mentioned in a later note appended to the MS of the source," this suggestion is needed only in the unlikely event that the continuer stopped writing in 641; see Treadgold, "Trajan," pp. 598–99. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, p. 183 and n. 71, suggests that John of Nikiu used both John of Antioch and this continuation ("the first and second continuations of the chronicle of John of Antioch" according to his views on John of Antioch, which I do not share; see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 311–29); but this conclusion cannot be sustained in view of the absence of any real parallels between John of Nikiu and Nicephorus and the presence of several contradictions between them, and Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 248–49, finally concedes, "It is more likely" that John

This continuer of John of Antioch appears to have relied mostly on his memory or on hearsay, not on a record compiled while events were unfolding. For example, he repeatedly misreported the name of the prominent general Priscus as "Crispus" up to Priscus' death around 613 and gave the incorrect date of 628/29 for the reception of the True Cross of Christ at Constantinople (if such a reception ever occurred).[9] Yet the quality of the continuer's narrative improved as it went on, presumably because the writer could remember more recent events more accurately. Our second precise date from his work, 638/39 for the death of the patriarch of Constantinople Sergius I, is correct.[10] The continuer's account of the year 641 was detailed and apparently reliable, though Nicephorus seems to have copied it carelessly. It evidently included correct figures for the lengths of the reigns of Heraclius and his son Constantine III, a precise and accurate figure for Constantine's military payroll in the spring of 641, and the correct month for the consecration of Paul II as patriarch of Constantinople on October 1, 641.[11]

Although after Paul's consecration Nicephorus records no further events for twenty-seven years, his manuscript of this source may have lost its final page or two, because he breaks off suddenly in the middle of the intrigues that caused Heraclonas to be replaced by Constans II on November 5, 641. The original continuation of John of Antioch probably reached that date, and possibly ended with the lynching of Constans' general Valentine in September 644, which finally settled the power struggle that had begun in 641.[12] If John of Antioch was a young man when he finished his *Chronological History* around 610, he may still have been alive in 645 and continued his own work.[13] Perhaps more likely, given that the *Historical Excerpts* of Constantine VII, our main source for John's history, include nothing from it after 610, is that a later writer without serious literary pretensions continued John's history.[14] Yet however brief and hastily written John

of Nikiu made no use of the continuation of John of Antioch. Howard-Johnston is, however, correct that John of Nikiu shows a remarkable awareness of events in Constantinople at this time. (See p. 2 n. 3 above.)

[9] Nicephorus, *Concise History* 1–2 and 18; cf. *PLRE* III, Priscus 6, and Mango, *Nikephoros*, pp. 173 and 185.

[10] Nicephorus, *Concise History* 26.

[11] Nicephorus, *Concise History* 27–32; cf. Mango, *Nikephoros*, pp. 191–93, Treadgold, "Note" (on the lengths of the reigns), and *Byzantium*, pp. 144–47 (on the military payroll).

[12] See Treadgold, "Note" (for Heraclonas' deposition), *History*, p. 310 and n. 31 (for Valentine's death), and "Trajan," pp. 606–8 (for Nicephorus' MS).

[13] John of Antioch may well have been young in 610, since the history he wrote at that date was little more than a copy of the history of Eustathius of Epiphania; see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 311–29, and "Byzantine World Histories." In general the 2005 edition of John of Antioch by Roberto is preferable to the 2008 edition by Mariev, who rejects many fragments that seem to me clearly authentic (except for the latter part of the *Excerpta Salmasiana*, which Roberto also realized are not by John of Antioch). My own findings on John of Antioch appeared too late for either editor to take them into account, though Mariev added a brief reference to them (p. 41* n. 2). See also Treadgold, Review of Ioannes, and Van Nuffeln, "John."

[14] Note that the compilers of the *Historical Excerpts* had access to an excellent library, with the latest editions of the histories of Eunapius and Malalas. If the compilers found

of Antioch's continuation may have been, it was an almost contemporary account of thirty-odd years that are otherwise poorly documented.

In a different category from more or less formal chronicles was the historical raw material in the bureaucratic reports and battle dispatches that the imperial government and army routinely prepared for their own use. Examples of these sorts of documents from the early Byzantine period can be found in diplomatic reports by Olympiodorus of Thebes, Nonnosus, and Peter the Patrician, and in battle dispatches by Maurice's general Priscus and the emperor Julian when he was Caesar.[15] From the early seventh century we have the official text of the emperor Heraclius' announcement of his victory over the Persians in 628, which is quoted in the nearly contemporary work now known somewhat misleadingly as the "Paschal Chronicle."[16] Theophanes Confessor's ninth-century *Chronography* appears to paraphrase other dispatches sent from the front by Heraclius, and it demonstrably paraphrases passages from two of George of Pisidia's poems, the *Persian Expedition* and the *Heracliad*.[17]

In other places Theophanes seems to be paraphrasing verses resembling George's extant poems but not found in our collections of them. Some modern scholars have postulated that the military dispatches reached Theophanes in the form of an "official history" of Heraclius' Persian campaigns that George compiled, composing verses of his own to give the documents a context.[18] Yet such a deliberate mixture of bureaucratic prose and formal poetry in a single work would be utterly unparalleled in Byzantine literature or anywhere else.[19] A more plausible version of this hypothesis would be that someone other than George compiled an account of Heraclius' Persian campaigns by combining official communications with an otherwise unknown poem by George that described the campaigns in detail. The failure of this poem to reach us despite the general popularity of George's poetry in Byzantium may mean that George left it unfinished at his death around 632. If a contemporary of George's compiled the composite account, he seems to have muddled the chronology and geography somewhat and produced a composition

the continuation of John of Antioch but knew that it was not by John himself, they would naturally not have included it among their excerpts from John. Unfortunately, since we lack most of John's text up to 610 and have only Nicephorus' paraphrase of the continuation, stylistic comparisons are of no use in deciding whether John continued his own work.

15 See Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 49 (Julian), 95–96 (Olympiodorus), 256–58 (Nonnosus), 269 (Peter), and 333 (Priscus, the same general whom the continuer of John of Antioch called "Crispus").

16 "Paschal Chronicle," pp. 727–34.

17 The clearest example of a paraphrased dispatch is Theophanes A.M. 6118 (317.11–323.24), referring to the campaign of 627–28 but misdated by Theophanes; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. 455–57, and the references to George's poems in their notes on pp. 435–58 passim.

18 Cf. Howard-Johnston, "Official History" and *Witnesses*, pp. 284–95, with Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lxxxi–lxxxii, and Pertusi, *Georgio*, pp. 17–31, 59–62, 63, and 66.

19 Howard Johnston, *Witnesses*, p. 293, admits that "there was no precedent for the inclusion of verse in place of the traditional rhetorical pieces, mainly speeches and antiquarian digressions, which adorned histories."

that could barely be called history or even literature. The most likely explanation, however, is that Theophanes himself (or his friend George Syncellus) found both the dispatches and the poem and combined them into his own chronicle, which we know drew on other poems by George of Pisidia and other documents.[20]

Naturally the imperial government kept many other sorts of records in its archives. These included an official register of the dates of death or deposition of the emperors and the lengths of their reigns, since this information was needed to date government documents by emperors' regnal years. In the form of an elementary chronicle now conventionally called the *Necrologium*, this record survives today in a fragmentary palimpsest of Constantine VII's *On Ceremonies* and in a corrupt Latin translation in the thirteenth-century *Chronicon Altinate*.[21] The register must have been kept current for several hundred years in several easily accessible copies so that it could be consulted by many government officials. Contemporary historians, however, show little if any knowledge of its dates, which they often omit or compute in a different way from the register.[22]

Otherwise the Byzantine archives seem not to have been organized in a way that made them easily consultable, and the Byzantines had no tradition of doing systematic archival research in any case. As a result, even an historian with access to the archives tended to use only whatever documents he found there by chance and thought were interesting.[23] Thus Theophanes, probably relying on research already done for the lost history of Trajan the Patrician, was able to quote part of an oration delivered to the senate by Constans II in 642/43, as well as a decree by Anastasius II in 715 appointing Germanus I patriarch of Constantinople.[24] Theophanes also drew on a favorable account of the career of Leo III before his accession, which may well have been delivered as an encomium of Leo soon after his coronation in 717.[25] Other documents of historical importance included the acts of the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680–81) and of the Quinisext Council

[20] Note that Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, p. 288, acknowledges that the possibility that Theophanes "stumble[d] across" Heraclius' dispatches is an "attractive notion."

[21] On the *Necrologium*, see Grierson, "Tombs" (including the additional note by Mango and Ševčenko on pp. 61–63). Preparing a proper edition of the Greek text of this chapter of *On Ceremonies* from the palimpsest and the Latin version (and fragments that survive from it in the chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon; see below, p. 219 and n. 80) would be difficult but possible and valuable.

[22] See Grierson, "Tombs," pp. 38–60, and Treadgold, "Note" and "Seven Byzantine Revolutions," pp. 206, 212–13, 216–17, 218, 220–22, and 223–24.

[23] Cf. Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 365, and Kelly, *Ruling*, pp. 117–20.

[24] Theophanes A.M. 6134 (342.9–20) and 6207 (384.19–385.4); cf. Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 476 nn. 1 and 2 and p. 537 nn. 3, 4, and 11.

[25] Theophanes A.M. 6207 (386.15–19), 6208 (386.25–390.26), and 6209 (391.5–395.12); cf. Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lxxxvii–lxxxviii and 547 n. 5. Though Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, p. 300, believes that this account was part of the work of the historian whom he (like me) identifies as Trajan the Patrician, this seems very unlikely, because (as noted by Mango and Scott) nothing from this biography of Leo appears in the *Concise History* of Nicephorus, which depended heavily on Trajan's history.

(691–92), though neither Theophanes nor Nicephorus seems to have bothered to consult either of those.

Additional works written during this period that recorded history without being histories themselves included the anonymous collection *The Miracles of St. Demetrius*, compiled around 683, and a sermon by the theologian Anastasius of Sinai that can be dated around 701. Though the former appears to have been overlooked or neglected by contemporary historians, the latter was evidently used by Trajan the Patrician for his history.[26] Of course, almost any type of writing could contain incidental historical material of a kind that a modern historian would use. Yet few Byzantine historians showed the originality, skill, or interest needed to extract historical information from texts that as a whole had no obvious bearing on history. Generally, Byzantine historians used information from a text that was not a history in the same way that they used information from the imperial archives—only when they happened to find it; not because they did systematic research to collect it.

Finally, almost all Byzantine historians of their own times drew on their own experiences and on the experiences of people they knew. Yet with the passage of time memories inevitably became less and less reliable, especially for complicated political or military events, faraway geography, or exact dates. Worst of all, not even an elderly informant with a good memory who had taken an active interest in war and politics from an early age could recall historical events much more than sixty years in the past with much accuracy or in much detail. Most informants, of course, could not recall as much as that. While they might occasionally remember something that an old man had told them long ago, or even something that an old man had told them he had been told by an old man, such recollections would be short and not very trustworthy. Unfortunately for modern historians, Trajan the Patrician wrote about ninety years after the last events recorded in the "Paschal Chronicle," which was the latest formal history at the time, and about eighty years after the last events recorded in the lost continuation of John of Antioch.[27]

As a result, no detailed narrative of internal Byzantine affairs by a well-informed Byzantine exists between 641, when Nicephorus' account ceases to depend on the continuation of John of Antioch, and the 680's, when the history of Trajan used by Nicephorus and Theophanes became fairly comprehensive as Trajan was able to draw on his own memories. These forty-odd years comprised most of the eventful

[26] On the *Miracles of St. Demetrius*, see Lemerle, *Plus anciens recueils*, especially II, pp. 111–62, dating the anonymous collection probably around 682–84, and in any case over 60 years after the Avars' deportation of the Romans on the Danube c. 614–19. I cannot accept the contention of Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 152–54, that this deportation should be dated to "the 580s" and the anonymous collection therefore to c. 650, which requires dismissing Lemerle's careful analysis of the contents of the collection; cf. Whitby, *Emperor*, pp. 156–91, for the case that the Danube frontier was essentially restored before 602. On Anastasius, see Treadgold, "Trajan," pp. 602–4.

[27] On the "Paschal Chronicle," see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 340–49, and Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 36–59.

reigns of Constans II (641–68) and Constantine IV (668–85). During this period, Byzantine records supplied only the most basic chronology of emperors, patriarchs, and church councils, while Syriac, Armenian, and Arabic sources gave only a skeletal account of Byzantium's wars with the Arabs. Measured by the quality and quantity of the historiography, this is the darkest age of Byzantine history. Some of what our sources do say about it is questionable, and they certainly omit many significant events that a knowledgeable contemporary would have included.

Among other defects, the sources for this period failed to describe the transformation of the Byzantine administration and army that we can infer from earlier and later sources, the coinage, and the seals of state officials and officers. Around this time the army was reorganized into the divisions known as themes, settled in the provinces also called themes, and supported by grants designated as military lands, evidently distributed from the enormous imperial estates that virtually disappeared during this period. Around the same time, the civil service was reorganized into smaller departments under officials known as logothetes. The absence of explicit evidence has led some modern scholars to postulate that these changes happened through a gradual process of evolution. Yet the government had no time for gradual measures when the loss of the empire's richest regions, Egypt and Syria, suddenly eliminated the revenues needed to pay the army, which was still essential to keep the Arabs from conquering the rest of the empire. Financial and military necessity therefore indicates that at least the system of military lands must have been deliberately enacted during the reign of Constans II, probably between 659 and 662.[28] Though any contemporary Byzantine historian would presumably have recorded such changes, the next Byzantine historian wrote some sixty years later, when no current officials remembered exactly what had happened and everyone had come to take the new military and administrative system for granted.

Trajan the Patrician

The tenth-century encyclopedia known as the *Suda* includes this brief entry in the margin of its text: "Trajan, patrician. He flourished under Justinian [II] the

[28] See Treadgold, *History*, pp. 380–86, and *Byzantium*, pp. 21–25, 98–109, 141–49, 169–86, and 206–9. Hendy, *Studies*, pp. 602–69, first demonstrated that the financial crisis left no alternative to this distribution of state land, which would have eliminated the expense of collecting rents and greatly reduced the expense of distributing pay and supplies to the army. The most elaborate expression of the gradualist case is in Haldon, *Byzantium*, pp. 208–53—which, however, fails to explain how Byzantium dealt with the crisis, because Haldon's conjecture that the state supported the army by distributing supplies in kind would actually have increased expenses through transport costs, inefficiency, and corruption. Haldon seems to reject the idea that Byzantium was saved by a sort of privatization because he gives Marxist ideology priority over the evidence and economic practicalities: "The main point to make is that this book is conceived and written within a historical materialist framework—that is to say, it is written from a 'Marxist' perspective. ... [T]here is no use in appealing to an objective, fact-based history, for such does not, and indeed cannot, exist" (Haldon, *Byzantium*, pp. 6–7).

Slit-Nosed, wrote a quite wonderful *Concise Chronicle*, and was very Christian and very orthodox."[29] Evidently the original author of this note had read Trajan's work and found that Trajan referred to himself as a contemporary of Justinian II during his second reign, between 705 and 711, when that emperor regained his throne after being deposed and having his nose slit in 695. If we take forty as the canonical age when a man "flourished" (that is, his *floruit*) and assume that Trajan reached that age around 705, he was born around 665.[30] Given the rarity of the name Trajan, a lead seal of "Trajan the Consul," dated roughly to the seventh century, probably belonged to our Trajan at an earlier stage of his career.[31] In this period patricians ranked just below members of the imperial family, and consuls ranked just below patricians.[32]

Theophanes must have had access to Trajan's *Concise Chronicle*, because he remarks in his *Chronography*, "Trajan the Patrician says in his history that the Scythians are called 'Goths' in the local language."[33] This citation shows that Trajan affected a classicizing style, because he referred to the Goths by the ancient name "Scythians," which had become an archaism for any barbarians from the northeast. Theophanes cites Trajan after recording the Battle of Adrianople (378), when the Goths defeated the imperial army; but his remark would apply even better to 704. In that year, according to a passage in Nicephorus paralleled in Theophanes, Justinian II escaped from his exile in the Byzantine city of Cherson to "the country of the Goths" (the Crimea) and then to "the Scythian Bosporus" (the Straits of Kerch).[34] Placed in this context, the sentence from Theophanes would explain Trajan's reference to "the local language" as the language of the Goths who had long been settled in the Crimea.

Even though this sentence of Theophanes is the only explicit citation of Trajan that we have, in all likelihood Trajan was the unnamed source shared by Theophanes and Nicephorus between 668 and 720. That such a source existed is plain from many similar passages in the two historians, although each historian paraphrased it rather freely, Nicephorus in a classicizing style and Theophanes in a less elegant one.[35] Since Theophanes could cite Trajan's history when he covered

[29] Cf. *Suda* T 901, with A. Adler, *Suda*, vol. I, pp. xv–xvi, for Adler's remarks on such marginal notes. This note may actually have been part of the original text of the *Suda*, accidentally omitted by a scribe and then added in the margin, and if so its source was probably the "Hesychius Epitome" of Ignatius the Deacon. (See below, pp. 104–6.) Otherwise on Trajan, see Treadgold, "Trajan," and Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 299–307 (though I cannot agree with Howard-Johnston that Trajan was an unreliable source for the period from 668 to 685, most of which would have been within his own memory and all of which would have been within the memories of men he knew).

[30] For forty as a man's *floruit*, see Mosshammer, *Chronicle*, pp. 119–21.

[31] See *PmbZ* I no. 8510 (Trajan the Patrician is no. 8511), referring to the same seal as that listed in *PLRE* IIIB, Traianus 5.

[32] On the ranks of patrician and consul (*hypatos*), see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, pp. 294–95 and 296.

[33] Theophanes A.M. 5870 (66.2–3).

[34] Nicephorus, *Concise History* 42.1–23.

[35] That Nicephorus paraphrased freely is evident from the uniformity of his elevated style (see Mango, "*Breviarium*"), and that Theophanes often (but not always) paraphrased freely

the fourth century, he would scarcely have failed to exploit it when he came to the years on which Trajan wrote as a contemporary. As for Nicephorus, the similarity between the titles of his *Concise History* and *Concise Chronography* and the title of Trajan's *Concise Chronicle* may show that Nicephorus implicitly acknowledged Trajan as a source.[36] The "very Christian and very orthodox" sentiments attributed by the *Suda* to Trajan evidently appeared in the common source of Nicephorus and Theophanes, which condemned the Monothelete heresy and gave credit for the failure of the Arab siege of Constantinople in 718 to God and the Virgin.[37]

Besides the material evidently from Trajan that Theophanes shares with Nicephorus, clear similarities of content show that Theophanes drew on the same work for events as early as 629. Given that Byzantine historians of their own times usually continued an earlier history, Trajan seems likely to have continued the "Paschal Chronicle," which concluded with early 630. The reason Nicephorus failed to use this part of Trajan's text may be that he read Trajan's history in a damaged manuscript that had lost its beginning; or perhaps Nicephorus simply found Trajan's brief and somewhat confused account inferior to the more detailed and coherent narrative in the continuation of John of Antioch, of which Theophanes was unaware.[38] Similarities of content also indicate that Trajan's history was the source of two quotations in the *Suda*'s entry "Bulgars," one relating to 680 and the other to 705.[39] If we include all the passages that may plausibly be attributed to Trajan's history, which according to its title was concise, we probably have more than half of its contents, mostly summarized by Nicephorus or Theophanes.

By means of some guesswork, the material attributable to Trajan can be combined with the note in the *Suda* to reconstruct the outline of that historian's career. Trajan seems to have been born in Constantinople around 665 into a family of prominent civil officials who rejected Monotheletism, which the government tolerated at that time. He acquired training advanced enough that he could write classicizing Greek, though probably all he received was a good secondary education, since it appears that at the time no institution offered a proper higher education. Trajan apparently entered the civil service under Constantine IV, and so before 685, but perhaps not until Monotheletism had been formally repudiated in 681, so that Trajan's hostility to it was no longer an obstacle to his promotion in the bureaucracy. Probably Trajan enjoyed the patronage of a certain John Pitzigaudium the Patrician who served as Constantine's ambassador to the Arabs

can be seen by comparing his text with his surviving sources (see Ljubarskij, "Concerning the Literary Technique").

36 Cf. the title of Trajan's *Concise Chronicle* (Χρονικὸν σύντομον) with the titles of Nicephorus' *Concise Chronography* (Χρονογραφικὸν σύντομον) and *Concise History* (Ἱστορία σύντομος).

37 On Monotheletism, cf. Nicephorus, *Concise History* 37.1–10 and 46.1–7, and Theophanes A.M. 6171 (359.25–360.7), 6203 (381.6–32), and 6204 (382.10–21). On God and the Virgin, cf. Theophanes A.M. 6209 (397.30–398.4) and 6210 (398.6–19), and Nicephorus, *Concise History* 56.2–8.

38 Treadgold, "Trajan," pp. 599–618.

39 Cf. *Suda* B 423.19–29, and Treadgold, "Trajan," pp. 611–14.

in 678, because Trajan mentioned John several times, praising his intelligence, expertise, and aristocratic birth.[40]

Trajan can barely have embarked on his official career when the young Justinian II became emperor in 685. From the start, the historian depicted Justinian as a fool, a monster of cruelty, and practically a madman. Trajan went so far as to accuse Justinian of ordering the massacre of the entire population of Constantinople just before he was overthrown in 695. Trajan's denunciation of Justinian for appointing bad officials, which figured prominently in the *Concise Chronicle* among far more serious charges, suggests that what the historian resented most may have been his own failure to advance in the bureaucracy during Justinian's reign.[41] Trajan plainly approved of Leontius' successful plot to overthrow Justinian and displayed such detailed knowledge of it that he may well have been one of the conspirators. Perhaps Leontius gave Trajan the rank of consul as a reward for his help. Trajan condemned Leontius' deposition by Tiberius III in 697, but apparently avoided criticizing the new emperor directly.[42]

The historian considered Justinian II's return to the throne in 705 a catastrophe for the empire and denounced the emperor's measures with absurd exaggeration. He asserted that in 711 Justinian exulted at the death by shipwreck of seventy-three thousand of his men, an impossibly high figure in any case, and massacred all the adult citizens of Cherson, even though Trajan's subsequent account showed that many of them survived to proclaim Philippicus emperor soon afterward. Trajan's intense hatred for Justinian can be explained most easily if the emperor punished him in 705 for his former support for Leontius. While Trajan cannot have been one of the "countless multitude" of civil and military officials whom he alleged that Justinian killed, the historian may well have lost his government post and seen some of his friends or relatives executed.[43]

Trajan must have regarded Justinian's assassination in 711 as condign punishment. Yet while giving the new emperor, Philippicus, credit for being an educated man, Trajan pronounced him incapable and dishonorable, most of all because he restored Monotheletism. Trajan also condemned the officials who accepted Philippicus' heresy, implying that they did so to gain promotions in the Church

[40] See Nicephorus, *Concise History* 34, and Theophanes A.M. 6169 (355.10–356.8; cf. Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. 496-97 and n. 5); cf. *PmbZ* I no. 2707. The name Pitzigaudium (perhaps Latin *Pitziae gaudium*, meaning "Pitzias' joy," a proud father's epithet for his son) may mean that John had Ostrogothic blood, since the name Pitzias is Gothic; see Treadgold, "Trajan," p. 597 n. 34.

[41] Nicephorus, *Concise History* 39, and Theophanes A.M. 6184 (366.20–23; cf. Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 512 n. 3), 6186 (367.15–32), and 6187 (368.15–18; cf. Treadgold, "Seven Byzantine Revolutions," p. 208).

[42] Theophanes A.M. 6190 (370.22 and 371.9–13).

[43] On Justinian's second reign, see Nicephorus, *Concise History* 42.69–75 and 45.1–52, and Theophanes A.M. 6198 (375.3–6 and 16–21) and 6203 (377.22–379.14); cf. Treadgold, "Seven Byzantine Revolutions," p. 215.

or bureaucracy, or (in one case) a medical professorship.[44] Even if Trajan had recovered his previous post by this time—and he may not have done so—he evidently resisted Philippicus' Monotheletism and resented how others were promoted ahead of him. After the revolution of 713, Trajan approved of the next emperor, Anastasius II, who had been protoasecretis, head of the imperial chancery. Before this, Trajan may well have served under Anastasius as an imperial secretary, which was a suitable appointment for a well-educated man. Trajan praised Anastasius for promoting learned officials, one of whom was probably Trajan himself.[45]

The historian deplored the revolution of 715, which forced Anastasius to abdicate in favor of Theodosius III, whom Trajan considered incompetent. He also lamented the decline of what he described as "literary education" at the time. Yet he seems to have remained in office under Theodosius, and he may well have been one of the senatorial officials who persuaded the emperor to abdicate and who elected Leo III to succeed him in 717.[46] That Trajan called Leo "pious," and may well have accorded him further praise that Nicephorus and Theophanes omitted because of Leo's later Iconoclasm, suggests that Leo was the emperor who gave Trajan his exalted rank of patrician.[47] By the time Trajan composed his history, around 720, he may have been about sixty-five. If he was still alive in 726, he apparently chose not to continue his history. Perhaps he feared the consequences of expressing his disapproval of the new doctrine of Iconoclasm, which Leo proposed in that year.

The earliest part of Trajan's *Concise Chronicle* seems to have been full of mistakes, especially in chronology, as must be expected of a work written from scattered sources up to ninety years after the events had occurred. It evidently opened with Heraclius' return to Jerusalem with the True Cross, which Trajan misdated to 629 rather than 630. According to Trajan, after converting a rich Jew on the way to Jerusalem, Heraclius reinstated the city's patriarch, Zacharias (who had actually died in Persian captivity), and expelled the Jews from the holy city. Arriving at Edessa, the emperor restored to orthodox believers the churches that the Persians had given to the Nestorians (actually to the Monophysites) and learned of the death of the Persian king Siroë (which had actually occurred in 628). Next Trajan included an inaccurate list of the Persian kings up to the Arab conquest.[48]

From this apex of the empire's fortunes, when Heraclius triumphed over the Persians and championed orthodoxy, Trajan portrayed a rapid plunge into disaster. The next year, presumably 630, the wicked Monophysite patriarch of Antioch, Athanasius, and the pro-Monophysite patriarch of Constantinople, Sergius, persuaded Heraclius to accept Monoenergism and Monotheletism. The

[44] See Nicephorus, *Concise History* 46, and Theophanes A.M. 6203 (381.6–32) and 6204 (382.10–21).

[45] See Nicephorus, *Concise History* 49–50, and Theophanes A.M. 6206 (383.29–31) and 6207 (385.18 and 386.5). On the protoasecretis and his bureau, see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, pp. 310–11.

[46] See Nicephorus, *Concise History* 52, and Theophanes A.M. 6208 (390.20–26).

[47] Theophanes A.M. 6209 (396.7–8), obviously copying Trajan.

[48] Theophanes A.M. 6120 (misprinted "6020" in de Boor's edition); for the errors, see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. 459–60.

Monophysites rejoiced, because affirming that Christ had one energy and one will meant conceding that he also had one nature. Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem (634–38) condemned the new heresy and wrote to Pope John IV (640–42 and therefore not yet pope), who had already rejected it. Heraclius was so shamed by these rebukes that he issued an edict (638) forbidding anyone to say that Christ had either one or two energies. Yet the next patriarch of Constantinople, Pyrrhus (638–41), was another Monothelete. In 641 Heraclius died and was succeeded by his son Constantine III, whom the patriarch Pyrrhus and Heraclius' widow, Martina, poisoned in order to proclaim Martina's son Heraclonas.

The senate and people of Constantinople soon deposed the heretical Pyrrhus, Martina, and Heraclonas, proclaiming Constantine's son Constans II as emperor (641–68) and Paul II as patriarch of Constantinople (641–53). Yet Paul too was a Monothelete. The deposed patriarch Pyrrhus traveled to Africa, where the holy Maximus Confessor converted him to orthodoxy (645); but then Pyrrhus returned to his Monotheletism "like a dog to his vomit" and became patriarch of Constantinople again (654). Next Pope Martin I held a council (actually in 649) that condemned Monotheletism, provoking the emperor Constans to bring Martin and Maximus Confessor to Constantinople to be tortured and exiled (653–62). After Martin's exile, Pope Agatho (678–81) held another council that condemned Monotheletism (680). While impious bishops and emperors persecuted the Church, the Arabs defeated the Byzantines in Syria (634–36), overran Palestine and Egypt (638–42), and destroyed the Byzantine navy at Phoenix, in southwest Anatolia (655). The Arabs' victories over the Christians "did not abate until the persecutor of the Church [Constans II] was miserably killed in Sicily" (668).[49]

The next emperor, Constantine IV, slit the noses of his two brothers after putting down a revolt in their favor in 669 (actually 681).[50] Then the Arabs sailed against Constantinople and harried the Byzantines for seven years (perhaps the nine years from 669 to 678) until "by the aid of God and the Mother of God" they were defeated and lost their entire fleet in a great storm.[51] In 678 the caliph sued for peace, which the distinguished ambassador John Pitzigaudium triumphantly negotiated; it was followed by favorable treaties with the Avars and others.[52] Here Trajan inserted a long digression on the Bulgars, who invaded Thrace in 680, defeated Constantine, and imposed an unfavorable peace "to the shame of the Romans because of the multitude of their sins." Seeing that this disaster "had happened to the Christians through God's Providence," Constantine called an

[49] Theophanes A.M. 6121 (misprinted "6021" in de Boor's edition); for the errors, see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 463. The phrase "like a dog to his vomit" (Theophanes A.M. 6121 [331.17]) is an allusion to 2 Pet. 2:22.

[50] Theophanes A.M. 6161 (352.12–23); for the errors, see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 492 nn. 1 and 2.

[51] Theophanes A.M. 6165 (353.25–354.11), and Nicephorus, *Concise History* 34.1–21; for the errors, see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 494 n. 3, and Mango, *Nikephoros*, pp. 193–94.

[52] Theophanes A.M. 6169 (355.10–356.8), and Nicephorus, *Concise History* 34.21–37.

ecumenical council that condemned Monotheletism and Monoenergism (680–81) and established true peace.[53]

In 685, however, the young and rash Justinian II became emperor. He stupidly agreed with the caliph to remove the Christian Mardaïtes from Syria, where they had been preventing Arab attacks on the empire. Justinian broke his father's treaty with the Bulgars, who defeated him, although he captured many Slavs, enrolling thirty thousand of them in his army. Then Justinian broke his father's treaty with the Arabs and led the newly enrolled Slavs against them, only to be defeated when many of those Slavs deserted to the Arabs. The emperor massacred the rest of his Slavic soldiers and their families (though a contemporary seal shows that he actually sold many Slavs as slaves). Justinian appointed cruel and greedy officials, imprisoned his capable general Leontius, and gave orders to murder the whole population of Constantinople in 695. Just in time to save the Constantinopolitans, a conspiracy in favor of Leontius slit Justinian's nose, exiled him to the Crimea, and lynched his evil bureaucrats.[54]

In 697 the Arabs conquered Byzantine Africa. Though an expedition sent by Leontius retook it, the Arabs quickly took it back. The Byzantine expeditionary force was returning to receive reinforcements in 698 when it mutinied and proclaimed the junior officer Apsimar emperor as Tiberius III. The mutineers seized Constantinople, slit Leontius' nose, and installed Tiberius. In 704, however, Justinian escaped from exile in the Crimea, first to the Khazars and then to the Bulgars, and vowed to slaughter all his enemies. He won over the Bulgar khan Tervel and with his help entered the capital in 705. After executing Leontius and Tiberius and a vast number of Byzantine officers and officials, Justinian attacked the Bulgars, who defeated him. He also sent a makeshift army against some Arab invaders, who defeated it and raided up to the Asian suburbs of Constantinople.[55]

In 710 Justinian decided to avenge himself on the people of the Byzantine Crimea, dispatching a naval expedition some hundred thousand strong with orders to murder everyone there. This expeditionary force killed everyone except the children, whom it enslaved, and the Khazar governor and some other prominent Crimeans, whom it sent to Constantinople. (The existence of a Khazar governor indicates that the real reason for Justinian's expedition was that the Khazars had occupied the Crimea.) Enraged that the children had survived, Justinian ordered the expedition to return, but on its way back it lost seventy-three thousand of its men in a storm. Insanely rejoicing at the deaths of his own soldiers, the emperor vowed to kill all the men of the Byzantine Crimea (who according to Trajan were already dead). These doomed men were therefore compelled to rebel and to accept help from the Khazars. Justinian sent an expedition of three hundred soldiers and

[53] Theophanes A.M. 6171 (356.18–360.7), and Nicephorus, *Concise History* 35–37.

[54] Cf. Theophanes A.M. 6178, 6179, 6180, 6184, 6186, and 6187, with Nicephorus, *Concise History* 38–40. On the sigillographic evidence for the Slavic slaves, see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 512 n. 3 (referring to A.M. 6184).

[55] Cf. Theophanes A.M. 6190, 6196, 6197, 6198, 6200, and 6201, with Nicephorus, *Concise History* 41–45.

offered to restore the Khazar governor, but when the governor died the Khazars executed the three hundred men. The Byzantines of the Crimea then proclaimed the exiled Bardanes emperor, under the name Philippicus. Justinian sent a third expedition to the Crimea, but when the Khazars reinforced the rebels Justinian's men joined Philippicus and brought him back to Constantinople. They took the capital and killed Justinian.[56]

To Trajan's disgust, Philippicus restored the Monothelete heresy. Doubtless as divine retribution, the Bulgars and Arabs raided the empire. In 713, when a conspiracy blinded Philippicus, the protoasecretis Artemius blinded the conspirators and became the emperor Anastasius II. Anastasius prepared Constantinople for an impending Arab siege, but when he sent an expedition against the Arabs in 715 it turned on him and proclaimed a provincial tax collector the emperor Theodosius III. The rebels seized Constantinople, and Anastasius abdicated and became a monk. As the Arabs advanced on the capital, matters went from bad to worse. In 717 the empire's leading military and civil officials persuaded the incompetent Theodosius to abdicate and named Leo III emperor. Meanwhile the Arabs took Pergamum as God's punishment when its people made a pagan sacrifice of a pregnant girl and her fetus.[57]

Reinforced by a fleet of eighteen hundred ships, the Arabs besieged Constantinople for thirteen months. The besiegers, however, suffered not only from the Byzantine weapon we call Greek Fire but from a freakishly harsh winter, the desertion of their Egyptian oarsmen to the emperor, famine, disease, and attacks by the Bulgars, who killed twenty-two thousand of them. In Theophanes' words, "many other terrible things also befell [the Arabs] at that time, so that they discovered by experience that God and the all-holy Virgin and Mother of God guard this city and the empire of the Christians, and that God never completely abandons those who call upon him in truth, even if we are punished for a short time because of our sins."[58] Meanwhile the emperor put down a rebellion in Sicily. At last the Arabs abandoned their siege and sailed home, but "a tempest from God through the intercessions of the Mother of God," a volcanic eruption, and Byzantine attacks destroyed all but five of the Arab ships.[59] Apparently Trajan's history concluded with Leo's suppression of a revolt by the former emperor Anastasius II in 718–19 and the coronation of Leo's little son Constantine V in 720.[60]

Though we cannot be quite sure of the exact form Trajan adopted for his *Concise Chronicle*, he certainly included some specific dates. Most probably he divided his work into annual entries like those of the "Paschal Chronicle," which he seemingly continued, and like those of Theophanes, who used Trajan later. Apparently Trajan

[56] Cf. Theophanes A.M. 6203, with Nicephorus, *Concise History* 45.

[57] Cf. Theophanes A.M. 6203, 6204, 6205, 6206, 6207, and 6208, with Nicephorus, *Concise History* 46–53.

[58] Theophanes A.M. 6209 (397.30–398.4).

[59] Theophanes A.M. 6210 (398.6–19); cf. Nicephorus, *Concise History* 56.2–8.

[60] For Trajan's account of all the events from 717 to 720, cf. Theophanes A.M. 6209, 6210, 6211, and 6212, with Nicephorus, *Concise History* 54–58.

dated his entries by tax indictions and regnal years of emperors, making his work much like the "Paschal Chronicle," which labels its entries by Olympiads, indictions, and consulships, and like Theophanes, who dates his entries by the years of the world, the Incarnation, emperors, and patriarchs.[61] Like both the author of the "Paschal Chronicle" and Theophanes, Trajan seems to have left some annual entries blank and to have expanded others to include related events that happened after the end of the year. Sometimes Trajan was unable to discover exact dates, and in the earlier portion of his work he often got them wrong, as we have already seen.

Apart from settling scores with past emperors and fellow officials, Trajan emphasized several themes in his history. His main point was that the empire's catastrophic decline during the years from 629 to 718 was God's chastisement for several emperors' toleration of Monotheletism and for the alleged crimes of Justinian II. Conversely, the defeat of the Arab siege of Constantinople in 718 showed that God would protect the empire from total destruction, especially under a pious emperor like Leo III. Trajan stressed the value of education and depicted the aristocratic officials of Constantinople as a necessary check on the power of unfit emperors. Trajan gave fairly detailed treatment to such subjects as early Bulgarian history, Justinian's escape from the Crimea, and the Arab siege of Constantinople. Trajan's account of events in the Byzantine Crimea in 710–11 included enough clues to show us that Justinian, far from being bent on insane revenge, was trying to suppress a revolt backed by the Khazars.[62]

Although Trajan must have relied chiefly on oral informants and his own memory, he also had some written sources. He seems both to have continued the "Paschal Chronicle" and to have been influenced by it. He consulted a sermon by Anastasius of Sinai written in 701.[63] He quoted government documents that he had apparently found in the archives, including Constans II's oration to the senate of 642/43 and Anastasius II's edict appointing Germanus patriarch in 715.[64] Trajan may also have sometimes misused archival documents; for example, the "up to seventy-three thousand men" drowned on Justinian II's naval expedition of 711 look like the full official strength of the army and navy units from which that expedition had been drawn.[65] Yet Trajan appears not to have used any historical narrative for his period, not even the continuation of John of Antioch copied by Nicephorus up to 641, of which Trajan seems not to have been aware.

Evaluating works that are largely lost in their original form is always somewhat hazardous. The two fragments on the Bulgars preserved in the *Suda* suggest that Trajan wrote rather better than Nicephorus or Theophanes, neither of whom was

[61] Cf. Theophanes A.M. 6121 (331.25–332.2), 6132 (341.12–13), and 6207 (384.19–21).

[62] Cf. Treadgold, "Seven Byzantine Revolutions," pp. 215–16.

[63] Treadgold, "Trajan," pp. 602–4.

[64] Theophanes A.M. 6134 (342.9–20) and 6207 (384.19–385.4).

[65] Nicephorus, *Concise History* 45.1–34, and Theophanes A.M. 6203 (377.22–378.16). At the time the soldiers of the original Opsician Theme (34,000 including the Theme of Thrace) and the oarsmen of the fleets (c. 38,400) would have totaled around 72,400 men; see Treadgold, *Byzantium*, pp. 64–75, especially 70–75.

a very skillful summarizer. No doubt Trajan held strong views on the history he recorded, and even if these led him to distort his narrative, particularly in his rancorous treatment of Justinian II, they would have given his work a certain coherence and focus. At a time when many Byzantines' interests had become more restricted along with Byzantine territory, Trajan was interested in Africa, the papacy, the Bulgars, and higher education. He did his best to cover the ninety years since the end of the latest historical work he had found, even though those years stretched beyond the personal memories of anyone still living. He showed some historical perspective, often mentioning that a condition that had begun in the past persisted until the time when he was writing.[66] While the *Suda* may have exaggerated a bit in calling Trajan's *Concise Chronicle* "quite wonderful," that chronicle did provide a unique and crucially important record of Byzantine internal history for at least the fifty years before 720.

Tarasius and the continuer of Trajan

Later in the eighth century, Trajan's *Concise Chronicle* found a continuer, whose work seems to have been appended to Trajan's history in manuscripts so that both were used by Theophanes and Nicephorus in their chronicles. Verbal parallels show that Nicephorus consulted this continuation of Trajan again when he wrote two of his theological works. The continuation also seems to have been a source of the chronicle of George the Monk, of the fragmentary *Great Chronography* (probably mistakenly called the "Great Chronographer"), and of a report presented by a certain John the Monk at the Second Council of Nicaea, in 787.[67] Parallels between the chronicles of Nicephorus and Theophanes show that the continuation of Trajan extended at least to 769, the year with which Nicephorus' *Concise History* concludes. In fact, because the continuation was sharply critical of iconoclasts, it could hardly have been written for distribution before 780, when the iconoclast Leo IV died and his iconophile widow, Irene, began ruling for her

[66] Cf. Theophanes A.M. 6120 (329.9–10, μέχρι τῆς σήμερον), with Theophanes A.M. 6171 (357.21, μέχρι τῆς δεῦρο, and 358.11, μέχρι τοῦ νῦν) and Nicephorus, *Concise History* 35.14 (μέχρι τοῦ δεῦρο) and 18 (νῦν), Theophanes A.M. 6178 (363.20, μέχρι τοῦ νῦν), Theophanes A.M. 6201 (377.12, ἕως τοῦ νῦν; cf. Nicephorus, *Concise History* 44.13–18, which omits the phrase), and *Suda* B 423.20 (ἕως νῦν). These phrases, meaning "until the present," are one of our best means of identifying passages from Trajan; see Treadgold, "Trajan," pp. 601–2, 612–13, and 614–15.

[67] Cf. Mango, *Nikephoros*, pp. 9–11, and Alexander, *Patriarch*, pp. 158–62. On the *Great Chronography*, see below, pp. 31–35. Afinogenov, "Lost 8th Century Pamphlet," shows that George the Monk and John the Monk used this source independently of Theophanes. I am not, however, convinced by Afinogenov's argument that some iconophiles later suppressed the role of the iconoclast Beser Saracontapechus because the Saracontapechi were related to the empress Irene, since Irene was happy enough to denigrate the Isaurian dynasty, to which she was also related. Finally, Afinogenov's suggestion that this source, rather than its predecessor, included Nicephorus' and Theophanes' account of the siege of Constantinople in 717–18 seems to me both implausible and incompatible with the other evidence for the earlier source, who I believe was Trajan the Patrician.

underage son, Constantine VI. If the continuer did write after 780, he would presumably have wanted to continue his story at least up to that year, which from an iconophile point of view was highly propitious.

A passage in Theophanes' chronicle describes 780/81 as the true end of Iconoclasm: "The pious [iconophiles] began to speak freely, the word of God began to spread, those desiring salvation began to renounce the world unhindered, the praise of God began to be exalted, the monasteries began to be restored, and everything good began to be manifest."[68] Yet Irene actually managed to suppress Iconoclasm only in 787, after several years of difficult maneuvering that included scotching a military rebellion and summoning an ecumenical council twice.[69] So Theophanes' premature declaration that the iconophiles triumphed in 780/81 looks as if it was copied from Trajan's continuer, who ended his work around 781, before he saw how difficult Iconoclasm would be to subdue. Theophanes concludes his entry for 780/81 by describing a coffin unearthed in 781 with a corpse and the inscription "Christ is destined to be born of the Virgin Mary, and I believe in him. O Sun, you will see me again under the emperors Constantine and Irene." This prediction by a pre-Christian prophet (in fact a contemporary hoax) would have made a satisfactory conclusion for an iconophile's chronicle.[70] In any case, the continuation of Trajan must have been written before 787 if it served as a source for John the Monk's report at the Council of Nicaea.

The continuer of Trajan seems therefore to have covered the sixty years from 721 to 781, which corresponded more or less to the first period of Iconoclasm. Imitating Trajan the Patrician as well as continuing his work, the continuer apparently arranged events in entries with regnal and indictional dates, because for these sixty years Nicephorus and Theophanes together mention twenty-five indictions and the lengths of all three emperors' reigns.[71] The continuer's annual entries helped Theophanes to arrange the events of the time in annual entries of his own, which seem to be generally accurate when they are based on the continuer, though much less accurate when they are based on other sources or Theophanes' own assumptions. Like Trajan's original chronicle, its continuation was not a mere list of events but a work of some literary sophistication.

The continuer of Trajan treated various subjects, including natural disasters and warfare with the Bulgars, Arabs, and Slavs; but his principal theme was the disastrous results of Iconoclasm. He probably began his account of Iconoclasm in 723,

[68] Theophanes A.M. 6273 (455.8–12).

[69] See Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 60–70 and 75–89.

[70] Theophanes A.M. 6293 (455.12–17). See Mango, "Forged Inscription" (though on p. 205 the date of "indiction 4" for the reception of the relics of St. Euphemia should be interpreted not as "780/81" but as "795/96").

[71] From 721 to 781 Theophanes gives indictional dates for twenty-three years (the first for 725/26 and the last for 780/81), whereas Nicephorus gives indictional dates for seven years (two different from those of Theophanes). The lengths of reigns appear at Theophanes A.M. 6232 (412.25–26 for Leo III, though Theophanes himself probably added the slightly inaccurate length for Constantine V's reign at 412.29–413.1; cf. Nicephorus, *Concise History* 64.1–2), 6267 (448.21–23, this time correctly for Constantine V), and 6272 (453.29–30 for Leo IV).

with the story of a Jewish sorcerer who persuaded the caliph Yazīd II to destroy icons in the caliphate, thus inspiring Leo III to do the same in the empire.[72] Next the continuer described how Leo—convinced by a volcanic eruption under the Aegean Sea in 726 that God disapproved of icons—introduced Iconoclasm and made it official in 730, abetted by his evil adviser Beser. After Leo died, in 741, his son and successor, Constantine V, faced a revolt by his brother-in-law Artavasdus, who killed Beser, seized Constantinople, and restored icons there before being defeated in 743. Then God's wrath over Iconoclasm caused a catastrophic plague, which ravaged the empire from 745 to 748. In 754 Constantine nonetheless held a false council that affirmed Iconoclasm, and he then persecuted iconophiles mercilessly until his death, in 775. His less ferocious son, Leo IV, ruled until he was succeeded in 780 by the pious Constantine VI and Irene, inaugurating a felicitous new age.

Who was the author of this continuation of Trajan's chronicle? The suggestion has recently been made that he was the future patriarch Tarasius, writing anonymously. The argument for anonymity is that no one would have dared to use his own name to attack the Iconoclasm of all three previous emperors of the reigning Isaurian dynasty and of Leo III's adviser Beser Saracontapechus, a relative of the reigning empress, Irene. Yet if even modern scholars suspect that Tarasius was the continuer, he could scarcely have hoped to hide his authorship in 781. At that date all Byzantine readers knew that Leo III, Constantine V, and Leo IV had been iconoclasts, and that Constantine had chosen Irene as his daughter-in-law; most of them must also have realized that he had selected Irene because she was related to his father's iconoclast adviser, Beser. Irene never tried to deny the Iconoclasm of her dynasty when she began the iconophile revolution that the continuer praised in his entry for 780/81. If the continuer of Trajan wrote then, his obvious purpose was to persuade his readers to support Irene's repudiation of Iconoclasm, and he presumably wrote with her knowledge and approval.

The main argument advanced thus far for identifying Tarasius as the continuer is that he was the only iconophile writer known at this date who cannot be eliminated as a possibility.[73] While this argument is hardly conclusive, since our information on writers at the time is far from complete, stronger arguments can be advanced for the identification. A learned iconophile from a family of distinguished officials, Tarasius served in the chancery until 784 as protoasecretis.[74] While Tarasius' biographer Ignatius the Deacon calls Tarasius a prolific author without explicitly mentioning that he wrote a history, neither do the biographies of Tarasius' contemporaries Nicephorus and Theophanes mention that either of *them* wrote histories. We know that they did so only because their histories are directly preserved under their names, as the continuer's history is not. That neither Nicephorus nor Theophanes mentions Tarasius as an historical source is no surprise,

[72] Theophanes A.M. 6215; Nicephorus tells a similar story in his *Antirrheticus* III.84, cols. 528–33, though not in his *Concise History*.

[73] Afinogenov, "Lost 8th Century Pamphlet," pp. 15–17.

[74] On Tarasius, see Efthymiadis, *Life*, pp. 3–38, and *PmbZ* I no. 7235.

because neither of them usually cites his sources by name. Ignatius does report that Tarasius composed "numerous writings of his own wisdom and learning that were calculated to combat the highly malignant heresy of the iconoclasts."[75] Nearly all these compositions against Iconoclasm, however, must be lost today—unless one of them was the anti-iconoclast continuation of Trajan's history.

Like Tarasius, the continuer of Trajan was evidently well educated, well connected, and firmly iconophile. He must be the source of Theophanes' lament that Leo III punished iconophiles, "especially those distinguished by noble birth and knowledge, so that the schools disappeared along with the pious learning that had prevailed from St. Constantine the Great up to this time; of these, together with many other fine things, this Saracen-minded Leo became the destroyer."[76] Yet the continuer of Trajan must himself have been a man of learning. Admittedly, his habit of introducing events with superfluous phrases like "it is not fitting to omit" or "it is fitting to recount" was somewhat awkward, perhaps acquired by preparing government reports.[77] Nonetheless, the continuer had enough classical education to call the Avars "Scythians" and to refer to a hundred pounds of gold as a "talent."[78] He knew enough history to accuse Constantine V of Nestorian tendencies, to call Constantine a "new Valens and Julian" because of his impiety, to pronounce Constantine a "new Midas" for hoarding gold, and to compare Constantine V to Diocletian as a persecutor of the pious.[79] Even the continuer's errors showed some historical knowledge, as when he misattributed the Aqueduct of Valens to Valens' brother, the Western emperor Valentinian I.[80]

The continuer made appropriate allusions to the Bible, comparing Leo III to pharaoh and Herod Antipas, the patriarch Germanus I to John the Baptist, and Constantine V to pharaoh and Ahab.[81] The continuer's descriptions of the civil war of 741–43 and the plague of 745–48 even seem to have included allusions to Thucydides (on the civil war in Corcyra) and Procopius (on the Justinianic plague).[82] The continuer was also, unlike most Byzantine authors, capable of irony.

[75] *Life of Theophylact* 5, p. 178; cf. Efthymiadis, *Life*, pp. 32–33 ("It is surprising ... that ... not many of his writings have survived").

[76] Theophanes A.M. 6218 (405.10–14).

[77] Nicephorus, *Concise History* 59.8 (παραδραμεῖν οὐκ ἄξιον), 71.1–2 (οὐ παραδραμεῖν δίκαιον), and 74.1 (οὐδὲ ... παραδραμεῖν ἄξιον), and Theophanes A.M. 6232 (413.10–11, ἄξιον ... διεξελθεῖν). Neither Nicephorus nor Theophanes generally uses such phrases.

[78] Theophanes A.M. 6224 (409.31 and 410.13). Such a style is not typical of Theophanes himself.

[79] Theophanes A.M. 6233 (415.24–30) and 6255 (435.8–14), 6253 (432.19), 6259 (443.19; cf. Nicephorus, *Concise History* 85.12), and 6267 (448.27).

[80] Theophanes A.M. 6258 (440.17–18), and Nicephorus, *Concise History* 85.

[81] Theophanes A.M. 6221 (407.25), 6224 (410.15), 6238 (423.4), and 6258 (439.16).

[82] Cf. Nicephorus, *Concise History* 65.14–20, and Theophanes A.M. 6234 (418.7–11), with Thucydides III.81.5 and 84.2 (fathers and sons kill each other, and human nature perverts itself), and Nicephorus, *Concise History* 67.9–21 and *Antirrheticus* III.65, col. 496C–D, and Theophanes A.M. 6237 (423.4–19), with Procopius, *Wars* II.22.10 (supernatural apparitions strike men who then fall ill of the plague, though Nicephorus' *Concise History* distorts the meaning; see Mango, *Nikephoros*, p. 216). The absence of close verbal parallels may mean

He related that the Virgin, appearing in a dream to a soldier who had thrown a stone at an icon of her face, congratulated him on "the noble deed you have done to me" a day before the man, running to fight the Arabs "like a noble soldier," was struck by a stone in his own face.[83]

As protoasecretis, Tarasius was in charge of the state archives, and the continuer of Trajan cited an unusual variety of statistics that must have come from those archives. The continuer recorded how many priests attended the iconoclast council of 754, how many ships were sent against the Bulgars in 760, 763, and 766, how many Slavs fled to the empire in 761, how much the gold basins captured from the Bulgars in 763 weighed, and how many prisoners were ransomed from the Slavs in 769.[84] The continuer's information on the numbers and origins of the workmen employed to restore the Aqueduct of Valens in 766/67 was so detailed that it seems to have been derived from official government requisitions.[85] The continuer was the source of several of our few recorded Byzantine food prices, some during the siege of Constantinople in 743 and others during a currency shortage in 768.[86] He also provided one of our rare figures for the official establishment of the Byzantine army, though he revealed a lack of military expertise when he assumed that Constantine V sent the whole force against the Bulgars in 773.[87] Tarasius may actually have been the only middle Byzantine historian who drew on more or less systematic research in the archives, having probably assigned his subordinate secretaries to collect relevant material for his history.

In general, at a time when Byzantine education and literature were approaching their nadir, the continuer appears to have been a remarkably well-informed and perceptive writer. His knowledge of government statistics, which may have been still more numerous in his complete text, was extraordinary among Byzantine historians. He showed an economic insight rare even among Byzantine officials when he explained that in 768 Constantine V's hoarding of gold caused a currency shortage that led to low prices, which most people ascribed to abundant supplies.[88] Unlike Trajan the Patrician, who shamelessly distorted events in order to vilify Justinian II, the continuer reported Constantine V's victories over the Bulgars so faithfully that Theophanes (though not Nicephorus) decided to suppress the

that the continuer was merely remembering Thucydides and Procopius or may be due to free paraphrasing by Nicephorus and Theophanes. (See above, p. 9 and n. 35.) Though John of Thessalonica in the *Miracles of St. Demetrius* 37 also connects such apparitions with the plague of 586 at Thessalonica, John too may have known Procopius' *Wars*, because he was an educated author who in his preceding chapter quotes Thucydides II.52.4.

83 Theophanes A.M. 6218 (406.5–14). This ironic use of the word "noble" (γενναῖος) is so atypical of the unsophisticated Theophanes as to puzzle Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. 560 and 562 n. 12.

84 Nicephorus, *Concise History* 72, 73, 75, 76 (cf. Theophanes A.M. 6254 [432.30–433.1]), 82, and 86.

85 Theophanes A.M. 6258 (440.17–24).

86 Theophanes A.M. 6235 (419.25–29), and Nicephorus, *Concise History* 85.

87 Theophanes A.M. 6265 (447.19–21); cf. Treadgold, *Byzantium*, pp. 64–69.

88 See Hendy, *Studies*, pp. 284–304 (with pp. 298–99 on these passages in Nicephorus and Theophanes).

reports of two of them.[89] Yet the continuer seems to have showed some boldness in writing a work that repeatedly denounced the Iconoclasm of the three preceding emperors, who after all were the father, grandfather, and great-grandfather of the reigning emperor, Constantine VI, and had been responsible for selecting almost every official and bishop in the empire in 781. Of course, the continuer would have needed less courage if his history had been officially commissioned by Irene to prepare her officers and officials for her repudiation of Iconoclasm.

The continuer appears to have included at least one personal reminiscence in his work. In describing the frigid winter of 764, Theophanes remarks of the ice floes that floated down the Bosporus that February: "We too became eyewitnesses of these, climbing on one of them and playing on it along with about thirty others of our age, who owned both wild and tame animals that died" of the great cold. Since at the time Theophanes himself was just three or four years old, too young to have played on the ice in this way, here he seems to be quoting his source, the continuer of Trajan. A boy who played so adventurously, and was the same age as other boys who owned wild animals, seems likely to have been in his teens.[90] If so, he was born between 745 and 751, but probably closer to the later date, because Byzantines grew up fast, and boys could marry as young as fourteen. Thus the continuer should have been in his early thirties when he wrote in 781. Apparently he mentioned having oral sources for events as early as 726 and as late as 750, times that could of course have been remembered by men who were still alive in 781.[91]

Tarasius was presumably born no later than 754, because he should have reached the canonical age of thirty before he became patriarch of Constantinople on Christmas Day 784. Some scholars have guessed that he was born around 730, because his hagiographer Ignatius describes him as suffering from "old age and disease" before his death in 806.[92] The Byzantines could, however, call a man old when he was in his fifties, and hagiographers liked to emphasize the venerable ages that their subjects attained.[93] If Tarasius was born around 750, like Theophanes' source who played on the ice in 764, he died of disease at a respectable age, in his late fifties. Before becoming patriarch, Tarasius may have served in the chancery

[89] Cf. Nicephorus, *Concise History* 73.9–11 and 11–20, with Theophanes A.M. 6247 and 6251 (cf. Mango, *Nikephoros*, p. 219, and Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 594 n. 7 and p. 596 n. 3).

[90] Theophanes A.M. 6255 (434.23–25). Here I differ from Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 601, in translating εἶχον as third person plural, referring to the writer's playmates, rather than first person singular, since the writer has just referred to himself with an authorial "we" in the plural. (I find extremely implausible the contention of Duffy, "Passing Remarks," pp. 56–60, that the third-person-plural subject is the "icebergs," which encased the frozen corpses of the animals.) Mango and Scott, pp. lviii–lix, and Mango, *Nikephoros*, p. 220, suggest that the writer may also have been George Syncellus; but he seems to have grown up in Palestine. (See below, pp. 40–45.)

[91] See Nicephorus, *Concise History* 60 (φασιν, "they say") and 71 (φασὶ δὲ πολλοὶ, "many say"). For the dates, see Mango, *Nikephoros*, pp. 211–12 and 218 (apparently the meteorites of 750 were different from those of 764, which are mentioned by Theophanes under A.M. 6255).

[92] Cf. Efthymiadis, *Life*, p. 7, citing Ignatius, *Life of Tarasius* 59.

[93] Cf. Talbot, "Old Age."

since his late teens and risen to the rank of protoasecretis in his late twenties.[94] He may then have written his history in 781, in his early thirties.

Tarasius' family included distinguished civil servants and at least three patricians. Tarasius was named for Tarasius the Patrician, the father of his mother, Encratia. An apparently reliable source records that the younger Tarasius' father was the quaestor George the Patrician, and that George's father was the former count of the Excubitors Sisinnius the Patrician.[95] George presumably held his high judicial office of quaestor under Iconoclasm, and Sisinnius must have held his high military rank of count of the Excubitors before it was superseded by that of domestic of the Excubitors around 743.[96] Though our texts based on the continuer of Trajan mention no George who could have been Tarasius' father, both Nicephorus and Theophanes mention a Sisinnius who could well have been Tarasius' grandfather. Theophanes gives him the nickname Sisinnacius ("Little Sisinnius"), presumably copying the continuer.[97] This Sisinnius, who like Tarasius' grandfather was both a patrician and a military commander, led the Thracesian Theme in 741, when he supported Constantine V in his war against the rebel Artavasdus; but in 744, soon after winning the war, Constantine blinded Sisinnius for allegedly plotting against him.[98] During the war Tarasius' father, George, even if he was not yet quaestor, was probably a civil servant residing in the capital occupied by Artavasdus.

Since the continuer of Trajan was an iconophile and considered Artavasdus an iconophile, we might expect him to sympathize with Artavasdus' rebels, as the continuer sympathized with the iconophiles who rebelled against Leo III in 727 and the iconophiles accused of plotting against Constantine V in 766.[99] Yet

[94] How unusual this may have been is hard to say, because we hardly ever know Byzantine officials' ages when they took office. A rare exception is the future emperor Alexius I Comnenus, who became a general in 1073, when he was about sixteen, and Domestic of the West when he was about twenty-one, in 1078. (See below, p. 365 and n. 130.) Byzantium was a society in which young men could advance quickly. For example, one might guess that Theoctistus (*PmbZ* I no. 8050) was in his twenties when he first became a powerful official sometime before his appointment as patrician and Chartulary of the Inkwell in 820, since he was still vigorous when he was assassinated in 855.

[95] *Catalogue of Patriarchs* 74, p. 291. The same source reports that the father of Tarasius' mother (Encratia: *PmbZ* I no. 1517) was Tarasius the Patrician (*PmbZ* I no. 7226), who was probably the same Tarasius the Patrician mentioned as a friend of the patriarch Germanus in a letter of c. 727 (Mansi XIII, col. 100B; for the date, see *PmbZ* I no. 2977 on the letter's addressee, Bishop John of Synnada).

[96] See Oikonomidès, *Listes*, pp. 321 (on the quaestor) and 330 (on the Excubitors, whose commander changed his title with the creation of the tagmata c. 743; see Treadgold, *Byzantium*, pp. 28–29).

[97] Theophanes A.M. 6233 (414.31–32).

[98] For this Sisinnius, see *PmbZ* I no. 6753; Tarasius' grandfather is no. 6755. Efthymiadis, *Life*, p. 8, suggests that Tarasius' grandfather may have been the Sisinnius Rhendacius (*PmbZ* I no. 6752) beheaded c. 719, before the continuation of Trajan began; but if so, it is curious that no later sources identify Tarasius as a member of the Rhendacius family. (Cf. *PmbZ* I no. 6397.)

[99] For the revolt of 727 and the alleged plot of 766, see Nicephorus, *Concise History* 60 and 81, and Theophanes A.M. 6218 (405) and 6257 (438); for Artavasdus as an iconophile, see Nicephorus, *Concise History* 64.36–38, and Theophanes A.M. 6233 (415).

the continuer seems to have been oddly ambivalent about Artavasdus' revolt. Nicephorus says of Artavasdus' rebellion: "Thereupon the Roman empire fell into great misfortunes, as soon as the struggle for power between [Artavasdus and Constantine V] stirred up a civil war among Christians. I believe many people have come to experience how many and how great disasters accompany such events, so that even human nature forgets itself and is set against itself—Why need I say more?"[100] Theophanes writes: "The Devil, who stirs up evil, aroused such madness and mutual slaughter among Christians in those days as to incite children against parents and brothers against brothers to kill each other mercilessly, and to set fire pitilessly to the buildings and houses that belonged to each other."[101]

Theophanes adds, after describing the end of the war: "Forty days later, by the just judgment of God, [Constantine V] blinded Sisinnius, the patrician and general of the Thracesians, who had taken his part and fought alongside him and was also his cousin. For he who helps the impious shall 'fall into his hands,' according to Scripture."[102] If this Sisinnius was Tarasius' paternal grandfather, he apparently fought on the side opposing his own son, George, during the three-year civil war and the fourteen-month siege of Constantinople.[103] Under such circumstances, while the son would not, as a civil official, have actually taken up arms against his father, the family would have been split and may well have lost other relatives in the fighting, along with some family property. That the family was related to Constantine V would have sharpened animosities among Sisinnius' relatives during the fighting, though it may have helped George regain Constantine's favor afterwards. If Tarasius was the continuer, he would naturally have had mixed feelings about the conflict and about his grandfather, who had supported the iconoclast Constantine and then been blinded by him.

These identifications, of course, are not certain. If Tarasius was not the continuer of Trajan, the "numerous" anti-iconoclast writings of Tarasius mentioned by Ignatius the Deacon would be almost entirely lost today. In that case the continuer must have been some other brilliant, well-educated, and well-connected young official, who wrote an iconophile history in 781 either on assignment from the empress Irene or in order to win favor with her. On the other hand, if the continuer was indeed Tarasius, we can be sure that he did succeed in securing Irene's favor. His history would have shown the iconophile empress that he was just the sort of man she wanted to be patriarch of Constantinople: clever, learned, loyal to her, and firmly devoted to the icons. Such were the qualities that led her

[100] Nicephorus, *Concise History* 65.14–20. In the last line, which is ungrammatical but more or less intelligible, I provisionally adopt Bekker's conjecture of οἶμαι for ἂν, though I suspect the real problem is that Nicephorus paraphrased his source carelessly; see below, p. 30 and n. 119.

[101] Theophanes A.M. 6234 (418.7–11).

[102] Theophanes A.M. 6235 (421.3–6). The quotation is from Ecclesiasticus 8:1.

[103] On the length of the siege, see Treadgold, "Missing Year."

to select Tarasius as patriarch in 784, and his tenure amply confirmed her assessment of him.

Whether or not Tarasius was the continuer of the *Concise Chronicle* of Trajan, the continuation, as we can reconstruct it from the chronicles of Nicephorus and Theophanes, was carefully and judiciously composed. Recent scholars have tended to regard Nicephorus and Theophanes as relatively late and unreliable sources and to reject their account of eighth-century history as hopelessly biased against Leo III, Constantine V, and Leo IV, and in favor of their antagonists. Yet an examination of what remains of this account of the years from 721 to 781—the earliest Byzantine narrative that survives even indirectly—indicates that it was both early and accurate. In 781 most Byzantine readers must have been at least nominal iconoclasts, and no writer could have hoped to deceive them about events that many of them would actually have witnessed.

Moreover, the continuer, who was too young to have played any personal role in events under Leo III or Constantine V, had no plausible motive for depicting those emperors as more vehemently iconoclast than they really had been or for praising their opponents for being iconophiles if they really had not been. Since we have seen that the continuer considered Artavasdus' revolt a tragedy, he had no reason to make Artavasdus into more of an iconophile than he actually was. If Leo III had not really been an iconoclast, and Constantine V had been only a moderate iconoclast, any iconophile writer in 781 would have been eager to emphasize those facts, because they would have benefited the reputation of the reigning dynasty and made the task of restoring the icons much easier for Irene. Since the continuer surely wanted Iconoclasm to be repudiated, he may if anything be suspected of minimizing the iconoclastic measures of Leo and Constantine. Again, however, as an author of a contemporary history, the continuer could not successfully distort the facts very much in any direction. Therefore recent efforts to discredit his accuracy, which have consisted of repeated assertions rather than reasoned arguments, seem badly misguided.[104]

The continuation of Trajan's chronicle seems to have been similar in length to Trajan's chronicle itself, if we can judge from what Nicephorus and Theophanes have preserved of both histories. Since the continuation covered sixty years and Trajan's chronicle covered only about fifty of its ninety years in much detail, the two works seem also to have been similar in the comprehensiveness of their coverage. While Trajan was a competent historian, the continuer appears to have been a better one: more temperate in his criticisms, more insightful in his analysis, more accurate and specific in his information, and more talented at collecting material from times before those he could remember. He apparently

[104] The culmination of these efforts, begun in a series of studies by Paul Speck, now appears in Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium*, especially pp. 1–260, who repeatedly reject evidence in the chronicles of Nicephorus and Theophanes. Their conclusion faithfully describes the motivation of their long book but not its achievement (p. 799): "We hope that, if we have achieved nothing else, we can say that the iconophile version of the history of eighth- and ninth-century Byzantium has at last been laid to rest."

did nothing to conceal the victories won over the Bulgars by Constantine V, whom he detested. Though the continuer was frankly an iconophile, his opinions about the havoc that Iconoclasm had wrought in the empire deserve much more respect than they have sometimes received. Unusually well-informed and learned at a time when education was in decline, he was an intelligent and remarkable man. He seems very unlikely to have been anyone but the future patriarch Tarasius.

Nicephorus of Constantinople

If Tarasius did write history, he set a precedent, because his successor as patriarch, Nicephorus, wrote two historical works that survive today.[105] Nicephorus was born around 758 in Constantinople into a family of iconophile officials like that of Tarasius. Nicephorus' father, Theodore, was an imperial secretary until about 761, when Constantine V exiled him to a fort in Paphlagonia on a charge of venerating icons. The emperor soon recalled Theodore in the hope of persuading him to relent, but on his refusal exiled him for six years to the nearby city of Nicaea, where his wife, Eudocia, and apparently his children accompanied him. After Theodore's death, around 768, Eudocia returned to Constantinople, where Nicephorus, who had just finished his primary schooling (seemingly in Nicaea), received his secondary education. Probably soon after the accession of the moderate iconoclast Leo IV, in 775, Nicephorus became an imperial secretary, like his father, and evidently served under Tarasius when the latter was protoasecretis.[106]

With a father who had suffered under the iconoclasts and a connection with Tarasius, whom Irene soon made patriarch of Constantinople, Nicephorus came well recommended to the iconophile regime of Irene and Constantine VI. Still as an imperial secretary, Nicephorus took a minor part in the Council of Nicaea in 787.[107] Not much later, however, he left the court, returning only after Irene was deposed in 802. Although he claimed to desire the monastic life, and founded a monastery near Constantinople and retired to it, Nicephorus took no monastic vows. Instead he stayed near the capital and by remaining a layman kept himself eligible for secular office, which he accepted soon after Irene fell. He seems, therefore, to have retired in disgrace after losing favor with Irene, perhaps for

[105] See Alexander, *Patriarch*, Mango, *Nikephoros*, pp. 1–30, Kazhdan, *History* I, pp. 211–15, Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 237–67, Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* II, pp. 61–71, Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 344–47, and *PmbZ* I, *Prolegomena* pp. 15–16 and no. 5301.

[106] See Alexander, *Patriarch*, pp. 54–59. Unlike Alexander (p. 57), I take Ignatius, *Life of Nicephorus*, p. 144, to mean that around the time of his father's death Nicephorus began only his secondary education, not his secretarial duties, which he presumably assumed when he finished secondary school. I conjecture that Theodore died c. 768 and Nicephorus became a secretary c. 775, because secondary education normally lasted from age ten or eleven to seventeen or eighteen, while tertiary education seems to have been unavailable at this time; see Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, pp. 81–120, especially p. 112.

[107] Alexander, *Patriarch*, pp. 59–61.

supporting Constantine VI's attempt to seize power from her in 790. Constantine, who was always reluctant to defend his partisans against his mother, appears to have done nothing to help Nicephorus, even after gaining a large measure of power later in 790 and keeping it until he was blinded in 797.[108]

Since Nicephorus' *Concise History* speaks well of the patriarch Pyrrhus (638–41), who had defended the Monothelete heresy, Nicephorus probably composed the work before he knew much about theology or church history. The presumption must be that when he wrote he was fairly young and had spent little time among monks or clergy.[109] On the other hand, he concluded the *Concise History* in 769 with the wedding of Leo IV and Irene, which marked the beginning of Irene's role in politics. The only apparent reason for him to stop at this otherwise inexplicable date was to avoid writing about Irene. If Nicephorus had written before 790, or during Irene's sole reign between 797 and 802, he would presumably have continued his account at least up to 780 and praised her. Probably he avoided writing about her because he was unsure what attitude to take while her power struggle with Constantine VI remained unresolved, as it did between 790 and 797.

Nicephorus' dabbling in historiography, for which he showed little passion or even talent, suggests that he was writing in order to win imperial favor, probably soon after 790, when he had recently lost it but still hoped he could regain it from Constantine VI.[110] Nicephorus' historical works probably did impress the next emperor, Nicephorus I, who around 802 appointed him head of the principal poorhouse in the capital and in 806 made him Tarasius' successor as patriarch of Constantinople. Like Tarasius before him and Photius after him, when chosen to be patriarch Nicephorus was an unmarried layman who cultivated a reputation for learning. One may suspect that ambition to hold high office was the main reason all three men deliberately avoided not just marrying, which would have excluded them from bishoprics or abbacies, but also taking religious vows, which might have excluded them from desirable secular posts.

Nicephorus' patriarchate was a tempestuous one. He had barely been rushed through his vows as a monk and his consecration as a deacon, priest, and patriarch when the emperor asked him to rehabilitate the controversial priest Joseph of Cathara. Although defrocked under Irene in 797 for performing the supposedly adulterous second marriage of Constantine VI in 795, in 803 Joseph had managed to negotiate the surrender of Bardanes Turcus, leader of a serious rebellion against Nicephorus I. The emperor was duly grateful and expected the cooperation of

[108] On the political situation, see Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 89–110. Cf. Alexander, *Patriarch*, pp. 61–64, who suggests that Nicephorus retired in 797; but in that case we would expect him, instead of avoiding writing about Irene in his *Concise History*, either to have praised her in order to regain her favor or, if he wrote after her fall in 802, to have written about her without reserve.

[109] Cf. Mango, *Nikephoros*, pp. 11–12, who suggests that the *Concise History* "is an *œuvre de jeunesse*, datable, perhaps, to the 780s."

[110] My tentative dating for the *Concise History* is close to that of Speck, *Geteilte Dossier*, pp. 425–32, but more or less by coincidence, since Speck based his date of 790–92 on supposedly disguised references by Nicephorus to contemporary politics that seem to me illusory.

his new patriarch, who seems himself to have suffered from Irene's displeasure after supporting Constantine VI. The new patriarch promptly called a council that restored Joseph to the priesthood. Yet by appearing to condone adultery this council began a schism with the monks of the Monastery of Studius that lasted until Joseph was again defrocked in 812 under a new emperor, Michael I.

Though by no means lacking in personal ambition, Nicephorus soon showed himself a sincere iconophile. He staunchly resisted Leo V's efforts to reestablish Iconoclasm in 814, and the next year he resigned as patriarch rather than accept it. In 820 Nicephorus refused Michael II's offer to return him to the patriarchate if he would agree to tolerate Iconoclasm. The exiled Nicephorus wrote several spirited polemics against Iconoclasm and managed to circulate them among iconophiles. Until his death in 828, he remained in exile not far from Constantinople, first at the Monastery of Agathus and then at the Monastery of St. Theodore, one of which was probably the monastery that he had founded during his earlier retirement from public life. After Iconoclasm was condemned as a heresy in 843, the Church revered Nicephorus along with Tarasius as ranking among its greatest iconophile saints.

Nicephorus probably composed his *Concise History* before his *Concise Chronography*, because both works count Constantine III and Constans II as a single emperor, a mistake that evidently resulted from Nicephorus' misreading his sources for his *History*.[111] Because the *Chronography* consists of lists rather than a narrative, Nicephorus doubtless compiled it chiefly from other lists rather than from literary sources, altering only his source's list of emperors to agree with his confusion of Constantine III with Constans II in the *History*. Yet Nicephorus appears to have composed both the *History* and the *Chronography* around the same time, when he was trying to make a reputation for himself as a writer and historian. He does, however, seem to have added a few entries on contemporary emperors and patriarchs to update the *Chronography* as late as 821, when he was in exile. Still later it was updated in part by other hands.[112]

Interestingly, we possess what appears to be a copy of a rough draft of Nicephorus' *Concise History*. In his revised and final version, Nicephorus made purely stylistic

[111] See Nicephorus, *Concise Chronography*, p. 99.12–21, which omits Constantine III and Heraclonas, wrongly describes Constans II ("Constantine") as "Heraclius' son" and Constantine IV as "Heraclius' grandson," and assigns Constans II a reign of twenty-eight years instead of twenty-seven, evidently including in it the ten months when Constantine III and Heraclonas reigned. Cf. Nicephorus, *Concise History*, chapters 27–32 and 33, in which Nicephorus apparently thinks he is referring to the same "Constantine," though chapter 33 actually applies to Constans II and the earlier chapters apply to Constantine III. Somehow Nicephorus overlooked the fact that he had recorded Constantine III's death at the end of chapter 29 (where Constantine's name must admittedly be understood from the previous sentence).

[112] The entries are Nicephorus, *Concise Chronography*, pp. 100.18–101.10 and 120.1–4. See Mango, *Nikephoros*, pp. 2–4 and 23–24, noting that British Library Add. 19390 "appears to have been copied from an original dating soon after 821," since it includes the correct length (5 years and 9 months) of the patriarchate of Theodotus I Cassiteras (815–21). Perhaps Nicephorus added the length of the patriarchate of his heretical successor immediately on learning of Theodotus' death.

revisions that are concentrated in the earliest section of the work and gradually become fewer until the rough draft breaks off about two-thirds of the way through. Apparently at that point Nicephorus decided to write a new version of his rough draft, then composed the rest without bothering with any preliminary draft, having become more confident of his abilities, or bored by his task, or both. How his rough draft came to be preserved and copied we can only guess. It shows that in revising Nicephorus did no further historical research and corrected none of his historical mistakes. One of the stylistic revisions he made was to change his work's title to *Concise History* from *Chronography*, another indication that he was writing before he composed the work he later called his *Concise Chronography* but also a sign that in his final draft he was aiming to write not just a chronography but a true history, with real literary pretensions.[113]

The main virtues of Nicephorus' *Concise History* can be attributed to its sources, and its main faults to Nicephorus' lack of skill in using those sources.[114] Nicephorus did write in formal Attic Greek, as he made clear by using the archaic dual number twice in his first chapter.[115] Yet he began his history without any sort of preface, though he was continuing a series of histories by Procopius, Agathias, Menander, and Theophylact that all had elaborate prefaces. Nicephorus neither divided his history into books, as his predecessors had done, nor recounted events in nearly as much detail as they had, though his sources surely contained material that he failed to use, because Theophanes used some of it. Theophanes also found more sources than the four whom Nicephorus consulted, who were John of Antioch, John's continuer (perhaps John himself), Trajan the Patrician, and Trajan's continuer (probably Tarasius), presumably found in just two manuscripts since continuations were normally appended to the text they continued.

Beginning abruptly with Phocas' murder of the emperor Maurice, in 602, where Theophylact had left off, Nicephorus runs through the reign of Phocas (602–11) by making minimal use of the history of John of Antioch and even omitting some of the relevant fragments that we possess from it.[116] Then Nicephorus covers the thirty years of the reigns of Heraclius, Constantine III, and Heraclonas (611–41) in somewhat more detail by using the continuation of John of Antioch, including such trivial details as the lynching of a servant girl who inadvertently spat on the coffin of Heraclius' first wife, Eudocia.[117] Nicephorus says nothing about the twenty-seven years from just before the accession of Constans II to just before his assassination (641–68), referring to Constans as if he were the same man as his father, Constantine III. For the next fifty-two years, from Constans' assassination to the baptism of Constantine V (720), Nicephorus abridges the *Concise Chronicle*

[113] See Mango, *Nikephoros*, pp. 5–7 and 25–29, including an edition of the first part of the rough draft on pp. 165–72.

[114] The theory of Speck, *Geteilte Dossier*, that Nicephorus and Theophanes shared a common "dossier" has been refuted by Lilie, *Byzanz*, pp. 384–408.

[115] Nicephorus, *Concise History* 1.9–10 (δύο δὲ ἤστην ἀδελφώ).

[116] Cf. Nicephorus, *Concise History* 1, with John of Antioch, frs. 319–321 Roberto.

[117] Nicephorus, *Concise History* 3.

of Trajan. Finally Nicephorus covers the next forty-nine years up to the wedding of Leo IV and Irene (769) by using the continuer of Trajan.

Photius in his *Bibliotheca* delivers this judgment on "the *Concise History* by Nicephorus, the sainted archpriest of Constantinople":[118]

> In his style he is simple and clear, using a beautiful vocabulary and a syntax that is neither careless nor unduly compressed, but of the sort that a truly accomplished rhetorician would use; for he avoids neologisms and does not overstep ancient and established practice. Moreover, in his composition pleasantness is mixed with grace, and on the whole in this work of history he overshadows many of his predecessors, except that because of his excessive brevity he seems not quite to attain perfect gracefulness.

In other words, Nicephorus wrote thoroughly archaic Attic Greek but narrated events too concisely to be Photius' ideal historian.

Since Photius cites the title *Concise History* and mentions that the work concluded with "the joining of Leo and Irene in marriage," he must have read the final version rather than the rough draft. The rough draft reveals that a number of grammatical errors in the final version were the fault not of copyists, as we might otherwise suppose and Photius probably assumed, but of Nicephorus himself, who failed to correct them in his final draft. Even in the part of the *Concise History* for which we have no rough draft, we can see that Nicephorus copied a sentence without a verb from the text of his source, because Theophanes used the same source and omits the same verb. We may also reasonably guess that several other unintelligible or incorrect passages are the result of careless paraphrasing by Nicephorus, or at least of his not correcting textual corruptions in his source.[119] Nicephorus therefore emerges as less than expert not just at theology but at grammar, though he knew a few features of Attic Greek that won him credit with Photius, like the dual number and the optative mood. Even some of these Atticisms may well have been copied by Nicephorus from Trajan the Patrician and his learned continuer.

Nicephorus must have noticed that no continuous history covered the years since the end of Theophylact's work in 603. He found a few good sources that spanned the gap, then set out to combine them in consistent Attic Greek. Since he impressed Photius, who was well educated (if largely self-educated), Nicephorus presumably impressed his less educated contemporaries. Yet though he may have assumed that intelligence, education, and good sources were all that anyone needed to write a good history, he proved himself wrong. Photius noticed

[118] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 66.

[119] See Mango, *Nikephoros*, pp. 27–28 (errors shared by the rough draft), 206 on 49.12 (the missing verb shared with Theophanes), and 206 on 49.3–5, 212 on 62.6, 215–16 on 66.16–18, 216 on 67.20, and 220–21 on 76.14–15 (likely examples of clumsy paraphrasing). See p. 24 n. 100 above for another possible example of Nicephorus' careless paraphrasing. See also Featherstone, *Nicephori patriarchae Constantinopolitani Refutatio*, pp. xxx–xxxiii, on the unclassical features of Nicephorus' Greek.

that Nicephorus rushed through events much more rapidly than predecessors like Theophylact and Procopius and that Nicephorus stopped before his own times and added none of his own experiences, unlike predecessors going back to Thucydides. For all its Atticizing, Nicephorus' *Concise History* became less popular among Byzantines than the unsophisticated but more complete and coherent *Chronography* of Theophanes.

Nicephorus' separate *Concise Chronography* is a set of tables rather than a work of literature. In the absence of a satisfactory modern edition, we cannot easily determine its sources or even exactly what Nicephorus' version contained, since our manuscripts vary and include later additions. The unsatisfactory modern edition consists of several lightly annotated lists with dates of the Jewish patriarchs, judges, and kings, the Persian kings, the Hellenistic rulers of Egypt from Alexander the Great to Cleopatra, and the Roman emperors from Julius Caesar to Nicephorus' own time (presumably until Constantine VI in the first edition and until Michael II in the second). Then come similar lists of the bishops of Constantinople (presumably until Tarasius in the first edition and until Theodotus I in the second), the popes, the bishops of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch, and the books of the Bible, both canonical and apocryphal. Although Nicephorus may possibly have done something like research in compiling his *Concise Chronography*, the example of his *Concise History* suggests that he simply copied a handful of sources, perhaps abridging as he went.

Neither of Nicephorus' historical compilations can be considered important histories. The *Concise History* seems to have been inferior to its sources both as history and as literature, and inferior as history to the parallel summary of the same and other sources in Theophanes' chronicle. Nicephorus' *Concise History* differed from its sources and from Theophanes primarily in being shorter and in combining its sources' annual entries into continuous prose, omitting most of their dates in the process. Nicephorus' style is elevated only in the technical sense that he uses archaisms and neglects chronology. The main reasons Nicephorus' *History* and *Chronography* survived while their sources did not were presumably that his brief summaries were convenient to use and that he was revered as a saint, so much so that someone thought even one of his rough drafts was worth copying.

The recovery of historiography

One further work of history may well belong to the 180-odd years between the "Paschal Chronicle" and the complementary histories of George Syncellus and Theophanes. The history usually, but probably wrongly, attributed to "the Great Chronographer" is represented by fifteen fragments written in an eleventh-century hand in leftover spaces in our tenth-century manuscript of the "Paschal Chronicle."[120] Though in

[120] See Whitby, "Theophanes' Chronicle Source" and "Great Chronographer" (including the best available edition of the fragments, although they are awkwardly divided among pp. 3, 5, 7, and 17–20), Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon*, pp. 192–200 (with a translation of the fragments), Mango, *Nikephoros*, pp. 17–18, Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. xc–xci, and

theory the two heavily abbreviated headings in this manuscript could be read either as "from the Great Chronographer" or as "from the *Great Chronography*," the former interpretation would appear to be unparalleled.[121] For example, in all the headings of excerpts in the *Bibliotheca* of Photius and the *Historical Excerpts* of Constantine VII "from" introduces the name of the work excerpted, and never the name of its author.[122] In all probability, therefore, the history excerpted in the manuscript of the "Paschal Chronicle" was entitled the *Great Chronography*. Applied to the work rather than its author, "great" presumably refers not to excellence but to size, suggesting that the *Great Chronography* was longer and more detailed than Nicephorus' *Concise Chronography*, which is after all just a series of tables.

The fifteen surviving fragments of the *Great Chronography* describe various disasters that befell the empire from the reign of Zeno (474–91) to that of Constantine V (741–75), or more precisely from 477 to 750. The events in the first fourteen fragments include nine earthquakes, two plagues, a rain of volcanic ash, the Nika Riot of 532, the collapse of the dome of St. Sophia in 558, and a shower of meteorites in 750. The fifteenth fragment, on how the emperor Maurice's alleged betrayal of his army to the Avars in 598 portended his murder in 602, has the heading "On Portents, from the *Great Chronography*."[123] This heading, which is at least as appropriate for the first fourteen fragments as for the fifteenth, implies that the excerptor chose only extracts on portents from the *Great Chronography*, not that the *Great Chronography* recorded only portents. Possibly these fragments derive from a lost section "On Portents" of the tenth-century *Historical Excerpts* of Constantine VII. If so, however, the *Great Chronography* cannot have had much to say about embassies, plots, proverbs, or virtue and vice, since our text of the *Historical Excerpts* never cites it on those subjects.[124]

Kazhdan, *History* I, pp. 214–15, Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* II, pp. 577–611 (including both the "Great Chronographer" and the *Anecdota Cramer*), and Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 332–33 (on the *Anecdota Cramer*). The edition in Schreiner, *Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken* I, pp. 36–45 is not well done, even apart from the fact that this chronicle consists of fragments of a longer work rather than a complete short chronicle like the others in the collection; the edition records the abbreviations inadequately, changes the order of the fragments arbitrarily, and interpolates a fragment ("14") simply because it may be copied by the same hand as the others, even though it has no heading, is in a different part of the MS from the other fragments, differs from them in subject matter, and is just a slight revision of the text of the "Paschal Chronicle." (Cf. Schreiner, *Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken* II, p. 80, with Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon*, pp. 181–82 and n. 481.) My discussion here depends on my inspection of a microfilm of the only MS, *Vaticanus graecus* 1941.

[121] Therefore read ἀπὸ (ἐκ in the second heading) τ(ῆς) μεγά(λης) χρονογρα(φίας), not τ(οῦ) μεγά(λου) χρονογρά(φου).

[122] Cf. the twenty-seven titles of excerpts in Photius' *Bibliotheca*, codd. 234–80 (e.g., cod. 234: τοῦ ἁγίου Μεθοδίου ... ἐκ τοῦ περὶ ἀναστάσεως λόγου), and the fifty-four titles of excerpts in Constantine VII's *Historical Excerpts* (e.g., I.1, p. 3: ἐκ τῆς ἱστορίας Πέτρου πατρικίου).

[123] πε(ρὶ) τεράτ(ων), ἐκ τ(ῆς) μεγά(λης) χρονογρα(φίας).

[124] While no section of the *Historical Excerpts* with the title "On Portents" is attested, such a title would fit well enough with the twenty-six titles we know, which represent barely half of the original fifty-three sections; see below, pp. 156–59.

Our fragments of the *Great Chronography* show clear parallels with our texts of John Malalas, John of Antioch, Nicephorus, and Theophanes. Yet none of our texts of those four historians includes quite all the information in the parallel fragments of the *Great Chronography*; nor do our fragments of the *Great Chronography* include quite all the information in the parallel parts of our texts of those four historians. Since our text of Malalas is abbreviated and our text of John of Antioch is fragmentary, the *Great Chronography* probably drew on their complete texts; but since our texts of Nicephorus and Theophanes are complete, the *Great Chronography* evidently depended not on Nicephorus and Theophanes themselves but on their sources. Of the twelve fragments that record events between 477 and 598, ten show parallels with Theophanes and our text of Malalas; since Theophanes used the full texts of both Malalas and John of Antioch, these were presumably the sources of at least these ten fragments of the *Great Chronography*. Then all three remaining fragments, which concern events in 740, 747, and 750, parallel Nicephorus and Theophanes, indicating that their source was presumably the continuation of Trajan that served as the common source of Nicephorus and Theophanes from 720 to 781.[125]

Thus in covering the period from 477 to 750 the author of the *Great Chronography* apparently took material from the complete texts of Malalas, John of Antioch, and the continuer of Trajan. Since these sources would leave a gap from 645 to 720 even if the compiler knew of the continuation of John of Antioch from 610 to 645, we can reasonably conjecture that the compiler also used the history of Trajan itself, which would have filled the lacuna in his information. After all, Nicephorus and Theophanes used both Trajan's history and its continuation, which were fairly brief and complementary texts likely to have been copied together in manuscripts. The *Great Chronography*, therefore, seems to have had at least four sources, which taken together could have provided continuous coverage of events from the Creation to 781. Of course the author may also have added information from his own experience and oral sources.

The beginning and concluding dates of the *Great Chronography* can only be guessed. The earthquake of 477 may have been the first portent it mentioned, or simply the first one selected by the excerptor "on portents." The meteorites of 750 seem to have been the last portents it mentioned, but it doubtless covered events that were not portents. Probably it extended at least to 781, like its latest source, the continuer of Trajan. Yet the *Great Chronography* seems to have ended before 790, the date of an earthquake at Constantinople mentioned by Theophanes, which the excerptor on portents would almost certainly have included if he had found it in his text.[126] Since the *Great Chronography* refers to Constantine V as "Copronymus" ("Name of Dung"), its author was an iconophile, and unless he was unusually brave or well protected, like the continuer of Trajan, he would probably not have written before the iconophile Council of Nicaea in 787, which

[125] For the parallels, see the notes to Whitby, "Great Chronographer," pp. 3–7 and 17–20, and Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon*, pp. 194–200.

[126] Theophanes A.M. 6282 (464.25–29).

would have made a suitable conclusion for his work. On the other hand, if the author had written after Constantine VI's fall, in 797, he would have been likely to include it as the end of the last complete reign, and the earthquake of 790 along with it. A date of composition around 787 therefore seems reasonable. As for the starting date, the title *Great Chronography* implies extensive coverage. Perhaps the work began with the Creation or the Incarnation, even if its earlier parts failed to mention any portents that attracted the interest of its later excerptor.

More fragments of the *Great Chronography* may well be preserved in the so-called *Anecdota Cramer*, a collection of excerpts including four that closely resemble fragments attributed to the *Great Chronography* in our manuscript. The *Anecdota Cramer*, conventionally named for its nineteenth-century editor John Anthony Cramer, is preserved in a fourteenth-century manuscript under the title "Excerpts from Ecclesiastical History." The main group of these excerpts extends from the birth of Christ to the murder of Patriarch Anastasius II of Antioch "while Phocas was still ruling," showing that the complete work ended no earlier than Phocas' deposition in 610.[127] The complete work also had at least eight books, because the manuscript inserts the title "From Book VIII" among its excerpts on Anastasius I (491–518).[128] While most of these excerpts derive from the church histories of Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodore the Lector, Theodore's history ended with 518.[129] The excerpts on later events could then derive from the full texts of Malalas and John of Antioch, which ended with 565 and 610, respectively.

All the parallels with the *Great Chronography* appear in a group of eighteen excerpts in the *Anecdota Cramer* that follow the main group and extend from Constantine I's victory in 324 to the rededication of St. Sophia in 562. These fragments seem to derive chiefly from Malalas.[130] Cramer himself was unsure whether these excerpts, ten of which have little to do with ecclesiastical history, came from the same text as the others.[131] Yet the excerptor, after copying passages on ecclesiastical history, may simply have decided to return to the same text and copy some additional passages, most of them on secular history. The alternative would be to assume that the first and second groups of excerpts in the *Anecdota Cramer* come from different chronicles and that the fragments explicitly ascribed to the *Great Chronography* come either from the second of these or from a third chronicle.

[127] The excerpts are edited in Cramer, *Anecdota* II, pp. 87–114, with the reference to Anastasius' murder at p. 111.28–31. Anastasius may have been murdered in either 609 or 610; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 427 n. 3.

[128] Cramer, *Anecdota* II, p. 109.

[129] The fact that none of the fifteen fragments explicitly ascribed to the *Great Chronography* depends on the ecclesiastical histories is not an argument against identifying it with the *Anecdota Cramer*, since all the fragments ascribed to the *Great Chronography* are later than Eusebius, Socrates, and Sozomen, and only the first three overlap with the history of Theodore the Lector, which is anyway preserved only in fragments. On Theodore, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 169–74.

[130] Cf. the parallels listed in Thurn's edition of Malalas, p. 531.

[131] The latter excerpts are on pp. 111.31–114.31; cf. Cramer's n. 49 on p. 111.

Given the scarcity of histories during this period, however, that three similar, extensive, and overlapping chronicles were composed between 562 and about 787, and that at least two of them were composed between 610 and about 787, seems quite unlikely. If all the Cramer fragments do derive from the *Great Chronography*, it had at least eight books and perhaps as many as ten, though these books were probably short, and it summarized the histories of Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodore the Lector, Malalas, John of Antioch, Trajan the Patrician, and the continuer of Trajan. Even if the *Great Chronography* began with the Creation or the birth of Christ, apparently its record of disasters began only with the reign of Zeno, and naturally its ecclesiastical history began only with the Resurrection. In any case, the *Great Chronography* was a compilation of considerable size and extent, as we might expect from its title, and showed an interest in events going back at least as far as 477 and probably much farther.

If the compiler of the *Great Chronography* wrote around 787, Nicephorus could have been aware of it when he compiled his *Concise History* and *Concise Chronography* around 791. Perhaps Nicephorus had seen the *Great Chronography* and intended to distinguish his *Concise Chronography* by its title from its recent predecessor, which Nicephorus' short but convenient tables were not meant to rival. The *Great Chronography* presumably surpassed Nicephorus' *Concise Chronography* in length and Nicephorus' *Concise History* in both length and chronological scope. On the other hand, the *Great Chronography* was presumably compiled before George Syncellus and Theophanes produced their own more comprehensive and more thoroughly researched *Selection of Chronography* and *Chronography* between about 810 and 814. The *Great Chronography* can hardly have been meant to compete with George and Theophanes, whose own titles may on the contrary imply that they were trying to replace the *Great Chronography*.

Although we need not assume that the author of the *Great Chronography* failed to identify himself in his original text, without further evidence we cannot reasonably identify him from the excerpts that we have, even if these include the *Anecdota Cramer*. He can hardly have been Tarasius or Nicephorus; neither of them would have been likely to record the same material twice in slightly different ways, and any excerptor would probably have recognized either of their famous names and included it in his heading along with the title. That the author of the *Great Chronography* was an iconophile is of little help, because around 787 most educated men were iconophiles. The task of summarizing a few earlier histories was not beyond the powers of anyone with a standard secondary education, and what we have of the text suggests no unusual literary ability. The texts of John of Antioch, Trajan the Patrician, and the continuer of Trajan, however, are likely to have been available only in Constantinople and perhaps only to patriarchal and civil officials. There must, however, have been a number of patriarchal and civil officials with a passable education in Constantinople around 787. Whoever the compiler was had the bad luck that his work was soon superseded by the more ambitious chronicles of George Syncellus and Theophanes.

One last composition appears to belong to this period and has a title that implies it was a history, though that implication is essentially false. The title has been

briskly translated as *Brief Historical Notes*, but can be better rendered as *Expositions of a Concise Chronicle* to reflect its vagueness, pretentiousness, and similarity to the title of Trajan's *Concise Chronicle*.[132] The date of the *Expositions* remains somewhat controversial, though it must be later than Trajan's history, which may have influenced its hostility to Justinian II.[133] Because it criticizes Leo III and Constantine V for their iconoclast measures, refers to Constantine V's burning a monk "in our time" (certainly before 775), and may have mentioned the icon of Christ above the entrance to the imperial palace, the date of composition seems to be after the restoration of icons in 787, but not very long afterward.[134]

This hopelessly ahistorical work deals in no logical order with the monuments of Constantinople, of which its superstitious explanations are mostly fabricated, along with its forged references. Thus Herodotus is cited as a source for the reign of Constantine I, and we are told that Constantine defeated Byzas and Antes, the legendary founders of Byz-Antium, whereas the senate house was built by a man named Sinatus.[135] The anonymous author appears to be trying to write in a style too elevated for his capacities and to have invented the names of some high-ranking associates in order to claim a social position higher than the one he actually held.[136] In a period when few men had a sophisticated sense of humor and most were ignorant of history, the *Expositions* is too elaborate to be a parody and must be a genuine attempt to deceive its readers.[137] It actually succeeded in misleading some Byzantine writers who used it in the late tenth century, when Byzantine scholarship was more advanced than it had been two hundred years earlier but

[132] The Greek is Παραστάσεις Σύντομοι Χρονικαί (*Parastáseis Sýntomoi Chronikaí*). The most extensive treatment, with a translation and a reprint of Theodor Preger's 1898 edition, is Cameron and Herrin, *Constantinople*. See also Dagron, *Constantinople*, pp. 29–53, Ševčenko, "Search," pp. 289–93, Kazhdan, *History* I, pp. 308–13, and Anderson, "Classified Knowledge."

[133] Cf. Cameron and Herrin, *Constantinople*, pp. 18, 210–12, and 250, and *Expositions*, chaps. 37 (Justinian II was a "tyrant"; here the otherwise unattested name of the Khazar Khan, Ibuzerus Gliabanus [*PmbZ* I, no. 2654], may come from Trajan) and 61 (Justinian II was "godless").

[134] See *Expositions*, chaps. 5d (criticism of Leo III for Iconoclasm) and 63 (criticism of an emperor who must be Constantine V for burning a monk in the Hippodrome), and 5b (the icon of Christ), though the last reference may be a later addition (but see Cameron and Herrin, *Constantinople*, pp. 22 and 174–75, who believe it is part of the original text but assume that it dates the passage before 726). Kazhdan, *History* I, pp. 308–9, catalogues the various dates that have been proposed, most of them more or less compatible with the date suggested here.

[135] *Expositions*, chaps. 7 (Herodotus), 38 (Byzas and Antes), and 43 (Sinatus).

[136] Here I differ from Ševčenko, "Search," p. 292, and Anderson, "Classified Knowledge," pp. 9–11, who think that the author's social connections were authentic, and agree with Kazhdan, *History* I, p. 311, who suggests that they were fictitious; see *PmbZ* I, nos. 2570 (Herodion), 2589 (Himerius the Chartularius), 2957 (John the Philosopher), 5715 (Papias), 6161 (Philip the Prefect), 6178 (Philocalus), and 7528 (Theodore the Lector). All are probably fictitious. Since they mostly relate to a time years before the date of composition, the author could have hoped his readers would fail to notice his fabrications.

[137] Here I differ from Kazhdan, *History* I, pp. 310–13, who believes the work is a parody.

knowledge of the eighth century had naturally faded.[138] Yet the *Expositions* is no proof that Byzantines were incapable of sound scholarship in the late eighth century. It shows only that some eighth-century Byzantines were superstitious and poorly educated, as many people have always been everywhere.

The remains of the works of Trajan and Trajan's continuer demonstrate that the best-educated Byzantines could still write erudite histories. The Byzantines' darkest age never plumbed the depths of the Dark Ages of Western Europe. Nonetheless, by early Byzantine standards, what occurred in the seventh and eighth centuries amounted to a sharp decline. After about 631, when Theophylact finished his *Ecumenical History*, no one appears to have written a large-scale formal history for over 150 years, even if we, rather questionably, consider the *Great Chronography* to have been a formal and large-scale work. After about 645, when the continuation of John of Antioch seems to have come to an end, Byzantine historiography evidently consisted only of the *Concise Chronicle* of Trajan the Patrician until Trajan's own continuer wrote around 781. When we include Trajan, we still have a gap of about seventy-five years before him and about sixty years after him. Such long silences had no parallels in earlier Byzantine historiography.[139]

The main reason for these silences was not an absence of men with the education needed to write history, though no doubt such men had grown fewer. Byzantium's uncertain prospects for survival largely explain the gap between 645 and 720 but not the gap afterwards. Iconoclasm must be much of the reason for the interruption between 720 and 781, both because Iconoclasm was unpopular with potential historians and because potential historians were unsure how long it would last. This explanation seems confirmed by the prompt recovery of historiography during the relatively brief eclipse of Iconoclasm between 780 and 815. These thirty-five years produced five iconophile historians: the continuer of Trajan, Nicephorus, the compiler of the *Great Chronography*, George Syncellus, and Theophanes Confessor, not counting the iconophile who pretended to write history in the *Expositions*. Yet none of these authors wrote a full-scale contemporary history in the tradition of Thucydides, as Procopius, Agathias, Menander, and Theophylact had all done in the sixth and early seventh centuries. Trajan, his continuer, Nicephorus, and the compiler of the *Great Chronography* wrote relatively unpretentious histories resembling the contemporary parts of the "Paschal Chronicle." Only toward the end of the iconophile interlude did George and Theophanes definitely revive history on the grand scale, if not in the classical style.

[138] See Dagron, *Constantinople*.

[139] For convenience, see the table in Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 382–84. See also below, p. 478.

2
George Syncellus and Theophanes Confessor

When George Syncellus began writing his world chronicle in 808, the dark age of Byzantine historiography was already over, along with the military, political, religious, and economic emergency that had lasted through most of the seventh and eighth centuries. Twenty-odd years after the abolition of Iconoclasm in 787, iconophiles had made important progress in education and scholarship, even if their success in writing elegant literature had been less striking. Nicephorus I (802–11) was proving to be an energetic and talented emperor, under whom Byzantine soldiers and settlers had reclaimed most of Greece and Thrace from the Slavs. After the last outbreaks of the bubonic plague had ceased in the mid-eighth century, the Byzantine population and economy had begun to expand strongly, and both Church and state shared in the general prosperity.

Some seven years later, when Theophanes Confessor completed George's chronicle after George's death, the future had become more clouded. In 811 Nicephorus I and much of his army had died fighting the Bulgars, and Nicephorus' successors Stauracius (811) and Michael I Rhangabe (811–13) had both been overthrown after short and unsuccessful reigns. The Bulgar khan Krum conquered or devastated almost all Byzantine Thrace before dying of a cerebral hemorrhage in 814, still undefeated. By early 815 the new emperor, Leo V the Armenian (813–20), was preparing to reimpose Iconoclasm, to the chagrin of most of the empire's scholars, clergy, and officials. Because of these and some more personal considerations, George and Theophanes seem to have thought of the years in which they compiled their long joint chronicle as a time of tumult and trouble.

George and Theophanes

We have less information about George Syncellus than about most authors of surviving Byzantine histories.[1] He never wrote a preface for his *Selection of*

[1] On George, see W. Adler, *Time* (chiefly about George), W. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, pp. xxix–lxxxvii, Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. xliii–lxiii, Ševčenko, "Search," Mango, "Who?" (attributing most of the *Chronography* of "Theophanes" to George), Kazhdan, *History* I, pp. 206–8, Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* II, pp. 89–99,

Chronography, the only work preserved under his name, and he seldom mentions himself in it. His continuer, Theophanes, in his own preface describes George as "the most blessed *abbas* George, former syncellus of the most holy patriarch Tarasius." While at this time *abbas* could mean a monk who was venerable without being the abbot of a monastery, any syncellus of the patriarch of Constantinople was an important person. Syncelli (more than one syncellus could serve at a time) were appointed by the emperor, ranked next after the patriarch, acted as the patriarch's advisers, and sometimes became patriarchs themselves. According to Theophanes' preface, George was "an eloquent and extremely learned man" who had consulted and analyzed "many" historical texts, combining and correcting them to construct a chronological narrative of the period from Adam to the emperor Diocletian.[2] This is a somewhat flattering description of what George accomplished in the *Selection of Chronography* that we possess under his name.

Theophanes says in his preface that after recording Diocletian's accession to sole power in 285 George fell mortally ill. On his deathbed he entrusted whatever he had written so far, along with "the materials to complete what was lacking," to Theophanes, because the two of them were "close friends." Theophanes reluctantly acceded to George's earnest request that he finish the task. Theophanes claims then to have excerpted "many [more] books" in order to bring the narrative down to the reign of the emperor Michael I, but to have added "nothing of my own." If taken literally, this last claim implies that Theophanes copied from someone else—whether George or another written source—even the final, contemporary portion of the *Chronography*, which ends with Michael I's abdication in August 813. This must have been less than two years before the *Chronography* was completed, because the text shows no awareness of Leo V's restoration of Iconoclasm in spring 815.[3]

Anastasius Bibliothecarius, the papal secretary who translated the chronicles of both George and Theophanes into Latin later in the ninth century, provides a very short biography of George. It seems, however, to be based merely on Theophanes' preface and a mistake. Anastasius tells us, as we already know from Theophanes, that George was a monk and a syncellus of the patriarch Tarasius. Anastasius also says that George stoutly opposed heretics and suffered many blows from secular rulers as a result, for which he was commended by name at the Seventh Ecumenical Council at Nicaea (787), as can be seen in its acts. Although the acts of the council say nothing of the sort about George Syncellus, they commend another George, the bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, for stoutly opposing Iconoclasm and suffering many blows from iconoclast rulers. Evidently Anastasius had

Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 331–32, Huxley, "On the Erudition," and R. Laqueur in *RE* IVA (1932), cols. 1388–1410. My own interpretation of George and his work owes something to most of these studies, particularly Mango's, but differs from each of them in some respects.

[2] Theophanes, preface (p. 3). On the office of syncellus, see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, p. 308.

[3] Theophanes, preface (pp. 3–4).

confused George Syncellus with George of Cyprus and otherwise knew nothing more about George Syncellus than we know from Theophanes.[4]

George tells us a little about himself in his *Selection of Chronography*, whose titles confirm that he was a monk.[5] At the beginning of his text he declares that he plans to begin with the Creation and to narrate the history of the Jews, Greeks, and other nations from a variety of sources. He also mentions where he plans to stop: "Finally, to the best of my ability, I shall describe up to the present year 6300 from the creation of the world [807/8], the first indiction, the God-abhorred 'covenant against' Christ and against our people which 'the Ishmaelites and the tabernacles of the Idumaeans covenanted' [Ps. 82:6–7], persecuting by divine judgments the people subject to the Spirit and practicing the 'apostasy' in the last days prophesied by St. Paul [2 Thess. 2:3–12]."[6] Here George must be referring to a persecution of Syrian Christians by the Arabs, whom the Byzantines often called "Ishmaelites." Such a persecution is described in Theophanes' *Chronography* under A.M. 6301 (A.D. 808/9) and 6305 (812/13), where it is said to have lasted five years.[7] Apparently these five years of persecution began in 807/8 and ended in 812/13. George's reference to "our people" seems to imply that George was a Syrian himself.

Therefore George began compiling his *Selection of Chronography* in 807/8. About halfway through his text, he refers to "the present year 6302," which corresponded to A.D. 809/10, so that he seems to have taken two years to advance that far.[8] If George then continued his work at the same pace as he had in the first half of his text, he would still have been writing in 811/12. If he took a bit more time to prepare the further "materials" that he gave to Theophanes, George could easily have lived until 812/13, when the narrative in Theophanes' *Chronography* ends. If so, and if Theophanes really did add nothing of his own to the *Chronography* that goes under his name, George himself is the most likely source for the final part of it. In that case, the description of the Arabs' persecution of the Syrian Christians up to 812/13 in the *Chronography* was written by George, and merely copied by Theophanes, or by a scribe working at Theophanes' direction.

In his own *Selection of Chronography*, George mentions several places that he had personally seen in Syria, specifically in Palestine. He says of Rachel's tomb, "I myself have seen her sarcophagus lying on the ground [between Jerusalem and Bethlehem] as I passed by there many times on my way to Bethlehem and to the so-called Old Monastery [*lavra*] of St. Chariton."[9] This passage appears to show that George, whom we already know to have been a monk, had been a member of the community at St. Chariton, because a traveler from Jerusalem would only have

4 Cf. Anastasius, pp. 33–34 with Mansi XIII, cols. 356D–357D. This apparent confusion is mentioned by W. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, pp. xxix–xxx and n. 6, Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. xliii, and Laqueur, *RE* IVA (1932), col. 1389.

5 George Syncellus, pp. 1 (general title) and 360 (title of second MS volume).

6 George Syncellus, p. 6.7–12 (where I would omit the comma in line 9 of the text).

7 Theophanes A.M. 6301 (p. 484.5–19) and 6305 (p. 499.15–31).

8 George Syncellus, pp. 2.29–32, 6.11–12, and 244.31; cf. W. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, p. xxxix n. 1.

9 George Syncellus, p. 122.20–22.

passed through Bethlehem and crossed the Judaean Hills to that isolated monastery if it was his destination. Although as a rule monks remained in their monasteries most of the time, the monks of St. Chariton must often have needed to consult with the orthodox patriarchate at Jerusalem, which had jurisdiction over their community. The most natural explanation of George's frequently traveling this route is that he acted as a representative of his monastery to the patriarchate.

Interestingly, the final part of the *Chronography* attributed to Theophanes names St. Chariton first among the Palestinian monasteries devastated by the Arabs in both 808/9 and 812/13, although it was not the most important of those monasteries. The chronicler, who at this point certainly seems to be George, observes that during the persecution the Arabs directed massacres "against each other and against us," with the result that in 812/13 some Palestinian Christians fled to Constantinople by way of Cyprus.[10] Presumably these Palestinian refugees were themselves the sources of the information about the persecution that appears in the *Chronography*. Though by that time George must have been living in Constantinople, if he had once been a monk at St. Chariton he would doubtless have kept an interest in the fate of his former monastery, and he may well have given some assistance to the refugees.[11]

Again in his *Selection of Chronography*, George mentions that the twelve stones Joshua had placed in the Jordan River near Jericho "are still there until this day" and that "up to the present" men harvest grain near Jericho around the vernal equinox for use at the Easter eucharist in Jerusalem.[12] George further observes that "the whole journey from Cadesh Barnea [in eastern Sinai] to the Valley of the Zered does not take as much as five days, as we know ourselves from experience," even though according to the Bible it took Moses and the Israelites thirty-eight years to wander from the first place to the second.[13] Since the Zered River is just south of the traditional site of Sodom in the Dead Sea, George may also have drawn on his own experience to describe the Dead Sea and the pillar of salt that had supposedly been Lot's wife, though some modern scholars have thought he quoted these descriptions from the lost history of Julius Africanus.[14] Evidently George had traveled a good deal in Palestine.

Given that Theophanes himself appears never to have left Byzantine territory, a further connection between George and Syria should probably be inferred from the many passages on the Arab caliphate in Theophanes' *Chronography*. These passages display close parallels to the later Arabic chronicle of Agapius and to the later Syriac chronicles of Michael the Syrian, Bar Hebraeus, and an anonymous

[10] Theophanes A.M. 6301 (p. 484.14–19) and 6305 (p. 499.23–31).

[11] So Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lx–lxi, and Mango, "Who?" 12–14.

[12] George Syncellus, pp. 167.18–19 (stones in the Jordan) and 168.12–16 (grain harvested at Jericho).

[13] George Syncellus, p. 165.16–18.

[14] See George Syncellus, pp. 114.13–24 (the Dead Sea, in which "I have beheld a great many wonders") and 113.20–22 (the pillar, "which even today many people come to see out of curiosity").

writer in the year 1234. The parallels have been convincingly traced to a shared source, a lost Syriac chronicle probably ranging from the Creation to 749/50 composed by the Monothelete Christian Theophilus of Edessa. The chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa is cited explicitly by the chroniclers Michael the Syrian, Bar Hebraeus, and Agapius, though all of them (except perhaps Agapius) seem to have known Theophilus' work only through the mediation of others, especially the lost ninth-century chronicle of Dionysius of Tel-Maḥrē.[15]

To judge from the text of Theophanes' *Chronography*, its author (whether he was Theophanes or George) used Theophilus' chronicle not in its original Syriac but in a Greek translation. The translator seems generally to have transmitted Theophilus' text faithfully but to have changed Theophilus' evenhanded treatment of Mohammed's life to make it explicitly anti-Muslim.[16] The Greek translation also included a continuation of the work after 750 by a well-informed orthodox Christian Syrian who showed a special interest in the Syrian city of Emesa (modern Homs). The last passage in Theophanes' *Chronography* that appears to be derived from this Greek continuation of Theophilus' chronicle records a Muslim persecution of Syrian Christians in 779/80.[17] The continuation of Theophilus' chronicle evidently ended before 783/84, the year to which Theophanes mistakenly dates the death of the caliph al-Mahdī, because a current resident of the caliphate would presumably have known that Mahdī actually died on August 11, 785.[18] The continuation of the Greek translation of Theophilus' chronicle therefore extended from 750 to a date between 780 and 783.

For anyone to prepare a Greek version of a Syriac chronicle was unusual at any date. Typically Greek texts were translated into Syriac, not Syriac texts into Greek. By this time, almost a century and a half after the end of Byzantine rule in Syria, the few Syrian readers who knew Greek would almost certainly have known Syriac as well. Consequently, the only apparent reason for a Syrian to prepare a chronicle in Greek soon after 780 is that he planned to send it or to bring it to Greek-speaking territory, nearly all of which was in the Byzantine empire. Moreover, 780 was a date of no special significance in the caliphate, but in Byzantium it marked the death of the emperor Leo IV and the accession of the iconophile

[15] See Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lxxxii–lxxxvii, *PmbZ* I, *Prolegomena*, pp. 220–25 (on the "Chronicle of 1234," Michael, and Bar Hebraeus), 226–34 (on Theophanes and the Syriac sources), and 234–35 (on Agapius), Conrad, "Conquest," pp. 322–48 (who first identified Theophilus as the source), and now Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle*, especially pp. 6–34 (also including a translation of the fragments beginning with 590). See also Baumstark, *Geschichte*, pp. 275 (on Dionysius), 298–300 (on Michael), 312–20 (on Bar Hebraeus), and 341–42 (on Theophilus). Further on Theophilus, see Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 194–236, and Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 400–409. Intriguingly, Palmer, *Seventh Century*, p. 95 and n. 230, has suggested that the "George of Raggath (?)" mentioned in the preface of Dionysius of Tel-Maḥrē may be George Syncellus, whose work in Greek may have found its way back to Syria.

[16] See Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 229–30.

[17] Theophanes A.M. 6272 (pp. 452.23–453.4); cf. Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. 624–26 and nn. 1–4.

[18] Theophanes A.M. 6276 (p. 457.11–13); cf. Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 631 and n. 3.

rulers Constantine VI and Irene. Orthodox Christians in Syria, who were also iconophiles, might reasonably have hoped that the new empress and her son would take more interest in them than previous, iconoclast, emperors had done.

In fact, several passages in the continuation of Theophilus' chronicle seem to be meant as appeals to the Byzantine government and Church to help the Christians of Syria. Eight of the continuation's twenty-one entries, including the last one (for 779/80), describe various oppressive measures taken by the Muslim authorities against Syrian Christians, which ranged from tax increases and confiscations to arrests and outright martyrdoms.[19] (The earlier material from Theophilus' original chronicle in Theophanes includes just six entries that mention Muslim oppression of Christians, over a period four times as long.)[20] Notably, under 763/64, the continuer of Theophilus records how the orthodox patriarchs of Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria and their suffragan bishops anathematized an iconoclast bishop of Epiphania (modern Hama).[21] This anathema, which dated from the reign of the iconoclast Constantine V, would have made clear to Byzantine readers that the orthodox Christians of the East were iconophiles like Irene and Constantine VI.

The Greek translation and continuation of the chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa that were copied into Theophanes' *Chronography* seem therefore to have been prepared primarily for a Byzantine readership, and in particular for the Byzantine rulers. That Theophanes' *Chronography* includes this material shows that it did in fact arrive in the empire. Presumably the supplemented translation of Theophilus' chronicle was among the "materials" that George entrusted to Theophanes around 813 so that Theophanes could complete George's work. If this Greek version of a Syriac chronicle was indeed composed in the hope of persuading Irene to negotiate with the caliph for better treatment for Eastern Christians, sending it to Constantinople would have been a matter of some urgency. We should therefore expect it to have been dispatched there not long after it was completed, at a date between 780 and 783.

In the absence of an international postal service, some private person must have brought the translated and supplemented chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa from Syria to Byzantium. Since by 808 George had a copy of the work in Constantinople, much the most likely person to have brought it was George himself. After all, George made the long and dangerous journey from Palestine to Constantinople at some point, and presumably for a good reason. As we shall see, the earlier part of Theophilus' chronicle probably became one of George's main sources for his *Selection of Chronography*.[22] To judge from the narrative in Theophanes' *Chronography*, after about 780 George lacked the detailed knowledge of events in Syria that he had

[19] Theophanes A.M. 6243 (p. 427.12–14), 6248 (p. 430.3–9), 6249, 6251 (pp. 430.32–431.3), 6253 (p. 432.8–15), 6258 (p. 439.9–13), 6264 (p. 446.21–25), 6272 (pp. 452.23–453.4).

[20] Counting from Theophanes' first mention of Islam under A.M. 6122, these entries are Theophanes A.M. 6135, 6157, 6195, 6199, 6210 (p. 399.20–25), and 6234 (pp. 416.18–417.14).

[21] Theophanes A.M. 6255 (pp. 433.28–434.5). Here and elsewhere I correct the systematic error of one year of the world in Theophanes' dates from 609/10 to 684/85 and from 725/26 to 772/73; see below, p. 75 and n. 146.

[22] See below, pp. 55–57.

had before that date; the obvious explanation is that soon after 780 George had ceased to reside in Syria. Moreover, almost the whole of the *Chronography*'s account of events in Constantinople from 781 to 813 seems to be the work of George. We have already seen that George probably composed the contemporary part of the *Chronography* up to 813, while the *Chronography*'s main Greek source for the preceding period, the continuation of the *Concise Chronicle* of Trajan the Patrician, concluded with 781. Of course, if the continuer of Trajan was the future patriarch Tarasius, as has been conjectured here, for Tarasius' syncellus to use and continue Tarasius' work would have been particularly appropriate.[23]

Even if George became Tarasius' syncellus only late in Tarasius' patriarchate (784–806), as a monk from Palestine George must have spent at least a few years in Constantinople before he could rise to such a high rank in the patriarchal suite. As a matter of fact, the acts of the Council of Nicaea in 787 record the presence of a certain "George, the most God-loving deacon and notary of the holy patriarchate" of Constantinople. If the young George Syncellus impressed the patriarch Tarasius enough that he later wanted him as his syncellus, naming him a deacon and notary of the patriarchate would have shown the patriarch's earlier recognition of George's orthodoxy and learning. The George who was a deacon and notary in 787 read to the council from a sermon by the fifth-century bishop Antipater of Bostra, in Syria, a suitable assignment for a recent arrival from the Syrian Church.[24] Despite the commonness of the name George, the clear connection of this deacon and notary with the patriarch Tarasius makes an identification with the future syncellus plausible, if of course not certain.

Although George Syncellus may in theory have brought the translation and continuation of Theophilus' Syriac chronicle to Constantinople after someone else had prepared them, George himself is the most likely candidate to be Theophilus' translator and continuer. We know from George's *Selection* that George later planned to compose a chronicle that would cover the whole period covered by Theophilus' chronicle and that would incorporate extensive material from the translation of that chronicle. George also wrote a further continuation of Theophilus' chronicle from 781 to 813, if he is indeed the author of that part of Theophanes' *Chronography*. The possibility that the continuer of Theophilus' chronicle was a native of Emesa seems compatible with his being George Syncellus. George was evidently born somewhere in greater Syria, and can hardly have been born in the monastery or in the desolate region of St. Chariton itself.[25]

The continuation of Theophilus' chronicle from 750 to 780 also seems to be the work of a fairly young man, as George would have been around 780. The first

23 On the continuation of Trajan's chronicle, see above, pp. 17–25.

24 Mansi XIII, cols. 13D–E; cf. *PmbZ* I, no. 2164.

25 For the continuer's possible connection with Emesa, see Conrad, "Conquest," pp. 337–38. Admittedly, of the four entries mentioning Emesa all but the one for A.M. 6252 mention other places as well, and Emesa was a place of some importance, mentioned five times in the earlier part of this chronicle at Theophanes A.M. 6125 (p. 337.5–12), 6126 (pp. 337.27–338.3), 6157, 6236 (p. 421.19–20 and 25–27), and 6237 (p. 422.5–8 and 19–23).

entries in it that look like eyewitness accounts both apparently concern church services at Emesa in 760/61 and 761/62, as if the author had only then begun to be aware of current events.[26] Admittedly, the material from the translation and continuation of Theophilus' chronicle in Theophanes' *Chronography* shows no unambiguous stylistic resemblances to the narrative from 781 to 813 that appears to be George's work. Yet a Syrian's Greek style could be expected to become more idiomatic during thirty years of residence in Greek-speaking territory, especially when that Syrian composed in Greek instead of translating from Theophilus of Edessa's Syriac, as he had done earlier.[27]

We have other reasons to think that George wrote the part of Theophanes' *Chronography* from 781 to 813.[28] During this period Theophanes was living in monasteries outside Constantinople, where he would have had trouble acquiring the detailed knowledge of government affairs and of other events in the capital that is apparent in the *Chronography*.[29] The whole final section, even apart from its two descriptions of the Arab persecution of Christians in 808–13, shows a continuing interest in the Christians of Syria, even though the author has less information about them than before.[30] The *Chronography* also includes long quotations from speeches made by Irene and Tarasius on the occasion of her choosing Tarasius to be patriarch in 784. Since Tarasius' speeches are quoted in the acts of the Council of Nicaea of 787, the whole account seems to have come from the patriarchal archives, which would have been accessible to George but probably not to Theophanes.[31]

Even earlier than this latest part of the *Chronography*, George appears to have made an addition to the entry for 767/68 in the continuation of Trajan the Patrician's chronicle. This entry records that the relics of St. Euphemia, which in that year

[26] Theophanes A.M. 6252 (p. 431.16–21, the reception of the head of John the Baptist at Emesa) and 6253 (p. 432.1–15, the arrest of the metropolitan Anastasius during the Easter liturgy). In the latter passage, note that the entry fails to mention what city Anastasius was metropolitan of, as if the author knew this so well that he forgot to say, and that Emesa was one of four metropolitan sees in Syria (along with Apamea, Tyre, and Damascus, Antioch being a patriarchate).

[27] Mango, "Who?" pp. 13–14, remarks, "Originally, this chronicle must have been written in Syriac and it is not inconceivable that George himself could have translated it into Greek. In view, however, of the rather distinctive idiom of the 'oriental' passages, I prefer to believe that the Greek version was prepared by another hand." Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle*, p. 10, observes, "The addition of notices on the succession of the Melkite patriarchs of Antioch in the years 742–56 implies that this continuator/redactor was a Melkite clergyman. It is quite possible that it was George Syncellus himself who did this work. … This suggestion is not in the end provable, but it is plausible and is a very neat and economical solution."

[28] Such is the argument of Mango, "Who?" pp. 14–17, further developed in Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lv–lxii.

[29] See below, pp. 64–66.

[30] Theophanes A.M. 6277 (pp. 460.31–461.6, on the patriarchates of Antioch and Alexandria), 6278 (p. 461.13–16, on the same), 6279 (p. 462.22–23, on the same), 6282 (p. 465.20–26, on the Arabs' martyrdom of the Byzantine general Theophilus), and 6298 (p. 482.20–23, on the Arabs' destroying churches on Cyprus).

[31] Theophanes A.M. 6277; cf. *Acta Conciliorum* III.1, pp. 8–12 (= Mansi XII, cols. 986D–990B).

were thrown into the sea by Constantine V, were restored to the saint's church in Chalcedon in 796. At that time, the *Chronography* says, "we ourselves beheld them along with the most pious emperors [Constantine VI and Irene] and the most holy patriarch Tarasius, and venerated the relics with them, having been found worthy of that great grace, though we were in fact unworthy." This reference seems to fit George, a high-ranking associate of the patriarch (and perhaps already syncellus), much better than Theophanes, who is unlikely to have left his monastery for the ceremony.[32] In assembling his materials, George appears not to have mentioned the restoration of Euphemia's relics under the date when it occurred but instead added this note to his source's record of the relics' original desecration.

The account of the years from 781 to 813 in the *Chronography* is a work of some subtlety, as we might expect of a learned and intelligent outsider like George but not of the less sophisticated Theophanes.[33] This narrative, departing from the unqualified praise or condemnation usually found in Byzantine chronicles, includes nuanced treatments of the empress Irene, the emperors Constantine VI, Michael I, and Leo V, and the patriarchs Paul IV, Tarasius, and Nicephorus. All these but Constantine VI receive some praise, the empress and emperors for their piety and the patriarchs for their holiness, just as the addition to the entry for 767/68 praises Tarasius, Irene, and (in that case) Constantine VI.[34] On the other hand, the *Chronography* also describes Irene and Constantine as unduly influenced by evil advisers, especially the eunuchs Stauracius and Aëtius, whom it blames for the quarrel between mother and son, for Constantine's blinding his ally Alexius Musele, and for Irene's blinding Constantine.[35] Irene, though partly excused because as a woman she was easily deceived, is said to have had "the passion to rule" and to have been "longing for power."[36] The blinding of Constantine is depicted not just as divine punishment for his own blinding of Musele but as a catastrophe that caused the sun to be dimmed for seventeen days.[37] The

32 Theophanes A.M. 6258 (p. 440.7–11); cf. Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. lix.

33 We should not, however, expect George or anyone else to have written contemporary history in anything like the style of his *Selection of Chronography*, a learned summary and discussion of the works of other scholars on ancient and biblical history. The absence of resemblances between George's *Selection* and the account of the period from 781 to 813 in "Theophanes" is therefore no argument against George's having written both of these very different compositions.

34 Theophanes A.M. 6258 (p. 440.2–3 and 11, Constantine, Irene, and Tarasius), 6276 (p. 457.15, Paul), 6277 (p. 460.24, Tarasius), 6280 (p. 462.27, Tarasius), 6292 (p. 474.25–26, Irene), 6293 (p. 475.15–16, Irene), 6294 (p. 475.28, Irene), 6295 (pp. 476.5, 477.32–478.1, and 479.5–6, Irene), 6296 (p. 480.12–13, Tarasius), 6298 (p. 481.15–16 and 20, Tarasius and Nicephorus), 6300 (p. 483.18, Irene), 6301 (p. 484.22–23, Nicephorus), 6303 (pp. 491.8 and 492.25, Irene), 6304 (pp. 493.21, 494.12–16 and 22–23, 495.14, and 496.22, Michael and Nicephorus), and 6305 (pp. 499.27–28, 500.8, and 502.3–4 and 10, Michael, Nicephorus, Tarasius, and Leo).

35 Theophanes A.M. 6282 (p. 464.10–12), 6284 (p. 468.13–16), and 6289 (p. 472.16–18); for Aëtius, cf. Theophanes A.M. 6283 (pp. 466.26–467.1).

36 Theophanes A.M. 6282 (p. 464.15–16) and 6287 (p. 469.24).

37 Theophanes A.M. 6284 (p. 468.16–21) and 6289 (p. 472.18–22).

chronicler was especially troubled by the clash between Constantine and Irene, which he attributed to the Devil's envy of their piety.[38] That conflict caused severe problems for Tarasius, George Syncellus' immediate superior, when he was caught between his two quarreling masters.

The chronicler shows mixed feelings in some other cases as well. He reports that Tarasius tolerated Constantine's second marriage even though it was contracted "illegally" and that all the people of Constantinople cursed Tarasius (who is, however, not named at this point) for crowning the emperor Nicephorus I.[39] The pious emperor Michael I is alleged to have been "enslaved" by his own evil advisers, particularly Theodore of Studius and his uncle Plato. Because the unfortunate Michael was "completely at sea in his management of the government," Theodore and Plato frustrated the emperor's laudable efforts to execute heretics and to make peace with the Bulgars.[40] Among others whom the chronicler otherwise praises, he observes that Leo V was badly humiliated when he failed to stop the Bulgars' raiding, that the patriarch Paul IV had condoned Iconoclasm, and that the patriarch Nicephorus had been selected by the dastardly emperor Nicephorus.

The condemnation of Theodore of Studius in the *Chronography* would be somewhat surprising if the chronicler were Theophanes, of whom Theodore later wrote a panegyric (without mentioning the *Chronography*). The main reason for the chronicler's condemnation of Theodore and Plato appears to be that at different times they had refused communion with both Tarasius and Nicephorus because those patriarchs were tolerant of Abbot Joseph of Cathara, who had performed Constantine VI's second marriage.[41] Such loyalty to Tarasius and Nicephorus could be expected of George but not necessarily of Theophanes. The fact that the *Chronography* gives especially strong approval to the patriarch Nicephorus despite his having been chosen by the detested emperor Nicephorus seems to indicate that George retained his high office of syncellus after Tarasius' death and served amicably under Nicephorus as Tarasius' successor.[42]

In view of George's condemnation of Theodore of Studius and sympathy for Constantine VI, George may well have been one of the (two?) syncelli whom according to Tarasius' biographer, Ignatius the Deacon, Constantine VI appointed as "guards" over Tarasius after the emperor's second marriage, in September 795.[43] While Ignatius seems to have disliked these syncelli (perhaps, as Tarasius' student, Ignatius thought he had a better claim to be a syncellus than they did),

[38] Theophanes A.M. 6282 (p. 464.10–11).

[39] Theophanes A.M. 6287 (p. 470.1–3, the illegality of the marriage), 6288 (p. 470.24–28, Tarasius' condoning it), and 6295 (p. 476.25–27).

[40] Theophanes A.M. 6304 (pp. 494.33–495.14) and 6305 (pp. 497.28–498.4, 498.14–499.4, and 499.31–500.2, Michael's incapacity and enslavement to his advisers).

[41] Theophanes A.M. 6288 (pp. 470.24–471.5) and 6301 (p. 484.19–28).

[42] For sympathetic treatment of the patriarch Nicephorus, see Theophanes A.M. 6298 (p. 481.22–32), 6303 (pp. 492.15–17 and 493.10–14), 6304 (pp. 494.33–495.6), and 6305 (p. 499.25–28).

[43] Ignatius, *Life of Tarasius*, chapters 46 and 47; for the date of the marriage, see Theophanes A.M. 6288 (p. 470.5–7).

the implication that they were hostile to Tarasius is obviously part of Ignatius' misrepresentation of the patriarch as a staunch opponent of Constantine's remarriage. Ignatius' only accusations against the syncelli are that they were much less pious than Tarasius and that anyone who wanted an audience with the patriarch had to make an appointment with them first. The first charge is too vague to have much force, while the latter practice must have been standard, because the patriarch would naturally have been a busy man.

In contrast to the balanced treatment of other contemporary emperors and patriarchs in the *Chronography*, its account of the emperor Nicephorus I, known from other sources as a capable, orthodox, and merciful ruler, is so wildly defamatory as to discredit itself. The emperor's many financial measures are attributed solely to greed and malice, and he is personally accused of every sin from cruelty, treachery, and hypocrisy to heresy, sorcery, and homosexuality.[44] The reason for such an excess of venom is probably to be found in a plot to replace Nicephorus with a certain Arsaber the Patrician that was detected in February 808. Arsaber himself was tonsured and exiled to a monastery in Bithynia.[45] The *Chronography* records that among the other plotters, who were whipped and exiled and had their property confiscated, was the patriarch's syncellus, who is not named.

The obvious possibility that this syncellus was George becomes a probability when we take into account the date of February 808 for the discovery of the conspiracy and the punishment of the conspirators.[46] George tells us at the outset that he began writing his *Selection of Chronography* during the year that ran from September 807 to August 808, and that he planned to describe the persecution of the Christians in the caliphate that had started during that year. If we allow time for news of the persecution in Syria to reach Constantinople, George cannot have started writing much before February 808. That was the month when the syncellus who had been deposed as a conspirator began his exile and therefore found himself with ample leisure to write a chronicle denouncing the emperor who had exiled him. The close correspondence between the dates is unlikely to be a coincidence.

If George, like his fellow conspirator Arsaber, was exiled to a monastery in Bithynia, this could also solve an otherwise puzzling problem: how George became a "close friend" of Theophanes, abbot of the Bithynian monastery of Megas Agros (the "Great Field"). Before this time George seems to have resided in Constantinople ever since his arrival from Palestine between 781 and 783, while Theophanes spent the years from 780 to 815 as a monk first in a monastery on an island in the Sea of Marmara and then, from about 786, as abbot of Megas Agros. The two men may,

[44] Theophanes A.M. 6303 (pp. 488.22–489.6 for heresy and sorcery, and 491.26–28 for homosexuality).

[45] Theophanes A.M. 6300 (pp. 483.23–484.2).

[46] The identification of the syncellus as George was first suggested by Mango, "Who?" pp. 15–16 (repeated in Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. lviii), but without noting the correspondence between the dates. George's reasons for joining the conspiracy against Nicephorus in 808 are uncertain, but to judge from the *Chronography* he was strongly opposed to Nicephorus' financial measures, some of which were to the disadvantage of the Church. (See Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 153–54.)

of course, have met before 808, for example at the Council of Nicaea in 787, which Theophanes reportedly attended. Yet before the dying George entrusted his vast work to Theophanes, and Theophanes reluctantly agreed to finish it because of the closeness of their friendship, the two men must have become familiar with each other during some time when they lived near each other. The only opportunity for such an acquaintance seems to have been after 808. If the place where George was exiled in 808 was Megas Agros, he would naturally have become well acquainted with its abbot.

In May 811, just before the emperor Nicephorus left on the ill-fated campaign against the Bulgars that ended with his death, the *Chronography* states that he ordered new taxes levied on churches, monasteries, and state officials. This may well be a hostile reference to the special contributions to the emperor's campaigns from churches, monasteries, and state officials that seem already to have been customary by this date.[47] The chronicler, who is apparently George, declares that an imperial official, the patrician Theodosius Salibaras, warned the emperor of the extreme unpopularity of these requisitions, only to receive the harsh reply "If God has hardened my heart like pharaoh's, what good shall there be for those under my rule?" The chronicler then insists, "These words, I call the Lord to witness, I myself, the writer, heard from Theodosius from his lips while he was still alive."[48] Theodosius also died on the Bulgarian expedition.

Although the emperor is unlikely to have made such an outrageous statement, which was conveniently unverifiable after he and Salibaras had both been killed, the writer could not credibly have claimed to have heard it from Salibaras if the two men had not even met at the time. Their conversation can hardly have been a social one, since the chronicler hated Salibaras, whom he describes as a loyal henchman of Nicephorus who was responsible for mistreating the deposed empress Irene.[49] Perhaps the answer is that Salibaras was sent by Nicephorus to collect the requisitions from the monastery where the chronicler was. There Salibaras, after hearing the monks' protests, tried to defend himself by saying that he too had protested to the emperor but had failed to move him. (The reference to pharaoh could be an embellishment, either by Salibaras or by George, unless the emperor had a sardonic sense of humor that they failed to appreciate.) Even if both George and Theophanes heard what Salibaras said, the insistence in the text that the hearer was "the writer" seems to identify him as George, because Theophanes professed to have added nothing of his own to the chronicle.[50]

[47] Cf. Constantine VII, *Three Treatises*, pp. 94–96 (for the date of the requisitions, said to go back to the eighth century), and 100 (for the churches, monasteries, and officials).

[48] Theophanes A.M. 6303 (pp. 489.25–490.4).

[49] Theophanes A.M. 6303 (pp. 489.28–30 and 491.7–8). On Theodosius, see *PmbZ* I, no. 7869. At Theophanes A.M. 6301 (p. 486.2), Theodosius' reported title of προμοσκρίνιος is almost certainly corrupt (cf. Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 667 n. 16; perhaps we should emend to πρωτοσπαθάριος); in any event, Theodosius could have held a different office two years later, in 811.

[50] Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lix–lx, suggest that "the writer" may also have been someone else, whose report George (or Theophanes) copied at this point; but, though

We may now recapitulate what we know or can reasonably guess about George's life. George seems to have been born around 745 into a Christian family in Syria, possibly at Emesa. While his native language would have been Syriac, he must have received a good secondary education in Greek, which was perhaps meant to prepare him for a career in the Arab civil service. If so, the Arabs' temporary ban on Christian civil servants in 759/60, recorded in Theophanes' chronicle, may have helped persuade George to become a monk instead.[51] He may still have been in Emesa in 760/61 to witness the reception of the head of John the Baptist there, and may also have been in the city in 761/62 to see the Easter liturgy disrupted by the Arab governor's arrest of the "most blessed" metropolitan Anastasius.[52] Not much later, after some travels in Palestine, George became a monk at the Monastery of St. Chariton, near Jerusalem. He made frequent trips from that monastery to Jerusalem, quite possibly on business with the patriarchate during that troubled time, when Christians were suffering from Muslim persecution.

Soon after news came that a new iconophile regime had taken power in Byzantium in September 780, George seems to have had the idea of translating the recent Syriac chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa into Greek and continuing it up to the current date. Apparently George planned to take his work to Constantinople in the hope of interesting Irene and her advisers in the plight of the orthodox Christians of Syria. Perhaps the church officials at Jerusalem secretly encouraged him, though to give him any formal authorization would have risked retaliation from the Arabs. George evidently traveled to Constantinople during a truce between the empire and the caliphate that prevailed between August 782 and April 785.[53] In Constantinople George's knowledge of history and devotion to icons appear to have won him the favor of Tarasius, who became patriarch on Christmas Day 784 and may have been an historian himself.

By the time of the Council of Nicaea in 787, George had probably become a deacon and notary of the patriarchate, so that he participated in the council in that capacity. Perhaps in 795, Constantine VI promoted George to be one of Tarasius' syncelli, so that as syncellus George accompanied Tarasius to the ceremony of the translation of the relics of St. Euphemia at Chalcedon in 796. Apparently George showed as much flexibility as his superior Tarasius in adapting first to the fall of Constantine in 797 and then to the fall of Irene in 801. In any case, George seems to have remained a syncellus even after Tarasius died in 806 and was succeeded by the patriarch Nicephorus. The new patriarch, who had certainly written historical

George must have depended on an eyewitness for his account of the Bulgarian campaign, for such a recent event his source was probably an oral one, while the identification of "I myself, the writer" is obviously meant to emphasize that in this case his knowledge was firsthand.

[51] Theophanes A.M. 6251 (pp. 430.32–431.3).

[52] Theophanes A.M. 6252 (p. 431.16–21) and 6253 (p. 432.1–15; see above, p. 45 n. 26).

[53] See Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 69–70 and 77–78.

works, was like Tarasius a scholar promoted directly from the laity and would have found George a kindred spirit and a helpful adviser.

Yet George, though he admired the patriarch Nicephorus, apparently disliked the emperor Nicephorus I and probably joined the plot to overthrow him in February 808. Then the emperor seems to have banished George to the Monastery of Megas Agros in Bithynia, where he became a close friend of its abbot Theophanes. George used his enforced leisure to begin revising and expanding his version of the chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa. Since George had his supplemented translation of Theophilus' chronicle on hand, he seems to have been allowed to bring his personal library along with him into exile. Having spent many years as a prominent churchman with historical interests, he probably owned a number of relevant books that he had had copied from the patriarchal library or acquired in other ways. He must also have had friends who could send him additional books from the capital, which was not far off.

After the death of the emperor Nicephorus, in July 811, and the deposition of his son Stauracius the following October, George was presumably allowed to return to Constantinople by the new emperor, Michael I, whom he liked personally but rightly considered to be a feeble ruler. Now again with access to the libraries of the capital, George continued writing his history, also keeping a record of current events as they occurred so that he could eventually add it to the end of his work. Probably soon after August 813, when he was nearing the age of seventy, George fell mortally ill. On his deathbed, he summoned his friend Theophanes and was able to persuade him to complete the unfinished chronicle by using the materials that George had prepared, no doubt including the books that George owned. Such a biography of George, however doubtful it may be in some of its details, is compatible with such evidence as we have and seems likely to be more or less correct.

George's *Selection*

George died before he could complete his *Selection of Chronography*, which he says he planned to conclude with 807/8, not 283/84, where the *Selection* now ends. Moreover, George can scarcely have meant the version we now have to be his final draft.[54] Besides lacking the formal preface customary for any ambitious Byzantine literary work, the *Selection* can be almost absurdly disorderly, repetitious, and inconclusive. Despite a few attempts at stylistic elegance that may include the dual number, the *Selection* is less polished even than barely literary compilations like the *Chronicle* of Eusebius of Caesarea and the "Paschal Chronicle."[55] The untidiness of the *Selection* has sometimes been taken as proof of George's incompetence as a scholar, thinker, or writer.[56] Yet many individual parts of the work

[54] As noted by Laqueur in *RE* IVA (1932), col. 1392.

[55] At George Syncellus, p. 372.25, the final words δυοῖν δέοντα may well have been added by George to the text of Julius Africanus; see W. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, p. 444 n. 5.

[56] E.g., by Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger* II, p. 548, who describes George as "badly confused."

show that George was well educated and intelligent, and support Theophanes' statement that he was "an eloquent and extremely learned man."[57] George himself criticizes one of his sources, Panodorus, for "being repetitious in many places" and praises another source, Annianus, for being "more concise" than Panodorus.[58] Such judgments show that George believed chronicles ought to be well organized and concise, even though his own chronicle in its present form is neither.

George's remarks might be taken to mean that he had read and compared the original Greek chronicles of both Panodorus and Annianus, fifth-century monks at Alexandria who prepared rival revisions of Eusebius' *Chronicle*, Panodorus in 408 and Annianus in 412.[59] Matters cannot, however, have been quite that simple, even if they were less complicated than some modern scholars have supposed. Many of the problems that we encounter in George's *Selection* can be explained by his failure to complete by the time of his death a satisfactory synthesis of the works of Panodorus and Annianus. Although George does seem to have consulted the original text of Panodorus' chronicle, he appears not to have had the original text of Annianus' chronicle, which he says he preferred to Panodorus'. Instead we shall see that George apparently drew upon an extensive summary of Annianus' chronicle in the earlier part of the Syriac chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa. Significantly, Dionysius of Tel-Maḥrē, who evidently copied Theophilus, mentions Annianus, but not Panodorus, as a source.[60]

Panodorus, Theophilus' adaptation of Annianus, and the Septuagint seem to have been the principal sources of George's *Selection*, but not the only ones. The chronicle was compiled from a range of sources, as George explains by using the word *Selection* in its title and repeatedly indicates in its notes and headings. More than nine-tenths of the text of the chronicle appears to be quoted or adapted from other writers, although George, like most ancient and medieval authors, sometimes fails to make clear where his quotations end and his own comments begin. Theophanes describes George as "having verified periods of time with much scrutiny, reconciled the contradictions in them, rectified them, and organized them as none of those before him had done."[61] While this is a great exaggeration of what George actually achieved in the text that we have, it evidently represents what he had set out to do and had told Theophanes he was doing. In most cases George did manage to establish what his sources said, to identify problems in them, and to determine what he thought the solutions to the problems were. Yet time and

[57] Theophanes, preface (p. 3.10–11).

[58] George Syncellus, pp. 35.20–21 (Annianus) and 31–34 (Panodorus).

[59] No satisfactory overall discussion of Annianus or Panodorus appears to exist, but the known facts can be pieced together from W. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, pp. lxiii–lxix, W. Adler, *Time*, pp. 72–105, Serruys, "Canons," especially pp. 16–28, Gelzer, *Sextus*, especially II, pp. 431–58, Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 124–25, and Wallraff, *Iulius*, pp. xxxv–xxxviii.

[60] See Dionysius' preface as quoted by Michael the Syrian, translated in Palmer, *Seventh Century*, p. 91.

[61] Theophanes, preface (p. 3.15–17).

again George failed to harmonize his sources into anything resembling a coherent narrative.

George's text teems with unexplained and apparently pointless repetitions and contradictions. For example, in the text as we have it, George must have mistakenly introduced part of the Egyptian king list of Africanus into the Egyptian king list of Eusebius.[62] George repeats word for word, within a few pages, a comment on Africanus' account of the eighteenth Egyptian dynasty and some remarks on the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah.[63] In two widely separated passages, George provides two incompatible solutions to the vexatious problem that according to received biblical chronology the patriarch Methuselah survived the Flood without boarding Noah's Ark.[64] George dates the foundation of Rome both to A.M. 4752 and to A.M. 4755 within three lines, and dates the first Olympiad to A.M. 4721, A.M. 4725, and A.M. 4719 within three pages, without ever explaining the discrepancies.[65] Later George announces that he will supply the chronologies of the later Ptolemies and of the kings of Pergamum, but includes neither chronology.[66] Parts of George's text record twice in two pages, in slightly different words, the death of Socrates, the suicide of the philosopher Peregrinus, the composition of Oppian's poem *On Fishing*, and a list of the bishops of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem at the end of the third century.[67] Such examples could easily be multiplied.[68]

While in a few cases copyists are probably to blame, the sheer number and complexity of the mistakes, confusions, and repetitions show that most of them must go back to George.[69] Though his sources often contradicted each other, his long discussions of many of the contradictions demonstrate that he intended to resolve them, not to copy them and leave them at that. Evidently George was a scholar who, like many of us, developed his ideas by writing them down, trying to

[62] George Syncellus, pp. 62.5–14 and 63.16–20 (where the editor, Alden Mosshammer, has corrected the error, though it can scarcely be the fault of a copyist).

[63] George Syncellus, pp. 69.8–12 = 76.27–31 (Africanus) and 261.14–262.7 = 266.3–25 (Zedekiah).

[64] George Syncellus, pp. 20 (assuming that Methuselah died in the Flood and emending the text of the Bible to put his birth earlier in a way that fails to solve the problem) and 130–31 (suggesting that Methuselah survived the Flood by some means known only to God); cf. W. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronology*, p. 27 n. 5, p. 30 n. 3, and p. 163 n. 3.

[65] George Syncellus, pp. 230.8–10 (A.M. 4752) and 12–13 (A.M. 4755), 231.1–4 (A.M. 4721), 233.5–8 (A.M. 4725), and 234.12–14 (A.M. 4719, implied); cf. W. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, p. 284 n. 1 (foundation of Rome) and n. 7 (first Olympiad).

[66] George Syncellus, pp. 350.5–6 and 368.16–18.

[67] George Syncellus, pp. 310.23–24 and 311.13–14 (Socrates), 429.6–7 and 430.14–15 (Peregrinus), 431.2 and 432.3 (Oppian), and 472.2–6 and 473.1–4 (bishops).

[68] Cf. W. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, pp. lviii–lix: "Retractions and structural defects in his chronicle suggest that Synkellos was unable to integrate the many facets of his chronicle into a fully unified system. ... Repetition, occasionally fairly extensive, is also not uncommon. On the other hand, promises to his readers are not met."

[69] For this reason Mosshammer is generally right to avoid emending the text, though in rare cases he seems too conservative; e.g., at George Syncellus, p. 396.3, ͵γλβʹ (3032) is surely just a copyist's error for ͵γτιβʹ (3312, Jacob Goar's emendation in the apparatus).

decide what he thought by seeing what he wrote. Thus he sometimes rearranged parts of his text and composed different versions, presumably planning to cancel all but one version later or even to cancel them all and write a new one combining and replacing the earlier versions. Yet he was naturally reluctant to discard any variant until he was sure that he would never need it again. After George's death, Theophanes, who made no claim to be a scholar of George's caliber and had only reluctantly agreed to continue George's work at all, must have had the more or less finished part of the *Selection* copied out more or less as it stood.

Among the many sources George cites, he indicates that he knew some only through the mediation of others.[70] For example, early in his text he cites the Babylonian historian "Berossus and those who followed him—I mean Alexander known as Polyhistor and Abydenus," thus showing that Alexander and Abydenus quoted Berossus.[71] A little later George mentions in a heading that one of his quotations "From Alexander Polyhistor" also includes "fantastic things, as they were written by Berossus," meaning that Alexander had quoted Berossus.[72] George also includes numerous excerpts from two different versions of the king lists of the Egyptian historian Manetho, attributing them to Africanus and Eusebius, sometimes with headings like "From Book III of Manetho according to Africanus," or "From Book III of Manetho according to Eusebius."[73] In this way George acknowledges that he cited Berossus by way of Alexander and Abydenus and Manetho by way of Africanus and Eusebius, not directly. As a rule, however, when one of his sources quoted another, George names only the original source. Although this arguably made more sense than citing only the secondary source, George's habit of omitting the names of intermediaries greatly complicates our task in identifying his direct sources.

We cannot check George's text against most of the sources he cites, because most of them are now lost, including Berossus, Alexander Polyhistor, Abydenus, Manetho, and Africanus. Of Eusebius' *Chronicle*, which George often cites, we lack the original Greek text, though we do have an almost complete Armenian translation and the partial Latin translation of St. Jerome.[74] A comparison of these translations with George's work shows that George's version of Eusebius is thoroughly rearranged, supplemented, and altered, and that George cannot have done all the rearranging, supplementing, and altering himself. In fact, George repeatedly cites the chronicles of Panodorus and Annianus, each of whom made criticisms and revisions of Eusebius on the basis of additional sources, while Annianus criticized and revised the slightly earlier work of Panodorus. Some modern scholars have

[70] See the list of parallel passages in Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, pp. 567–609, which however includes not only sources George cited but also sources he did not cite (some later than George) that show parallels to his text.

[71] George Syncellus, p. 15.1–2.

[72] George Syncellus, p. 28.17–20.

[73] George Syncellus, pp. 82.1–2 and 83.7–8.

[74] See Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 26–33.

therefore concluded that George largely transcribed the chronicle of Annianus, taking it as his source for the chronicle of Panodorus.

To complicate matters further, the texts of Annianus and Panodorus are both lost to us in their original form. We know Panodorus' chronicle exclusively from George. Material from Annianus' chronicle is preserved both by George and by several Syriac chroniclers of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. Among these Syriac chroniclers, Elijah of Nisibis, Michael the Syrian, Bar Hebraeus, and the anonymous of A.D. 1234 all cite Annianus by name. This concentration of references to Annianus clearly indicates that the Syriac chroniclers found information from Annianus in a Syriac text. What is less clear is whether the Syriac chroniclers used a Syriac translation of Annianus' original chronicle or some other work written in Syriac before the eleventh century that referred repeatedly to Annianus' chronicle, although the latter possibility seems much more likely. If they did use not Annianus' chronicle but a work that referred to it, what could that work have been?

The most recent discussion of George's sources has tentatively conjectured that George knew both Panodorus and Annianus not from their original texts but from a collection of excerpts, probably in Syriac, that was also used by the Syriac chroniclers.[75] If so, this collection of excerpts from Panodorus and Annianus was compiled before the early ninth century, when George used it. Yet extensive dossiers of unadorned excerpts are unknown in our surviving medieval manuscripts. Except for fairly short anthologies made chiefly for theological purposes, medieval writers who went to the trouble of excerpting other authors generally did so to compose a literary work of their own, not an informal and anonymous dossier. This conjectural collection of excerpts from Panodorus and Annianus would need to have been very long. The mass of material it would have contributed to George and the Syriac chroniclers could scarcely have been shorter than the entire *Chronicle* of Eusebius. This hypothetical collection would also have been nearly as long as the whole original text of Panodorus or Annianus, since their chronicles seem mostly to have been adaptations of Eusebius' work. The lost Syriac collection of excerpts from Panodorus and Annianus would in fact have been the equivalent of a lengthy Syriac chronicle. Why, then, would its compiler not have called it a chronicle and named himself as its author, even if he also cited Panodorus and Annianus as sources?

If we accept the hypothesis of a large, anonymous Syriac dossier of extracts from Panodorus and Annianus, we must also believe that it survived for centuries in Syria, where it was used by the Syriac chroniclers whose work we possess, or that it was used by their sources, often in preference to earlier Syriac chroniclers whom

[75] So W. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, pp. lxviii–lxix: "It is thus reasonable to suppose that, as with so many of his other sources, Synkellos did not know the works of his Alexandrian predecessors [Annianus and Panodorus] in their entirety, but simply as a body of excerpts assembled by some earlier editor or editors. ... The circumstances naturally invite speculation about a possible connection between Synkellos and Syriac chronography. ... It is in any case possible that sources of Syrian/Palestinian origin played a greater role than previously imagined in the mediation of source material to Synkellos. ..."

they explicitly name as sources. George Syncellus poses an even more awkward problem, because he would have needed to consult this Syriac dossier when he began writing in Byzantium in 808, about a quarter of a century after he had last been in Syria. Did he bring this bulky dossier in his luggage when he went to Constantinople in the early 780's, long before he appears to have had any idea of writing about the times it covered? In any event, if George and the Syriac chroniclers all drew on the same dossier, why does George repeatedly mention both Panodorus and Annianus, while the Syriac chroniclers mention only Annianus, and never Panodorus?

The most likely solution is that George and the Syriac chroniclers did use a collection of Syriac excerpts from Annianus (*not* Panodorus), but that this collection formed the earlier part of the chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa, not some hypothetical dossier. We have already seen that the latter part of Theophilus' chronicle probably served as a direct source for George and an indirect source for Michael the Syrian, Bar Hebraeus, and the anonymous chronicler of 1234.[76] Theophanes' *Chronography* also shows signs of dependence on Theophilus, in the form of parallels with Syriac sources that first appear nearly at the beginning of Theophanes' text.[77] Theophilus' chronicle probably started with the Creation, like the chronicles that drew upon it.[78] Evidently George arrived in Constantinople from the East soon after 781 with a Greek translation of Theophilus' entire chronicle and its continuation up to his own time. This text George kept with him throughout his career at the patriarchate and took with him into exile in 808, when he made it the armature for his own *Selection of Chronography*.[79]

The conjecture that George took his material from Annianus by way of Theophilus' Syriac chronicle is supported by a comparison of the passages in George's *Selection* and the "Paschal Chronicle" that derive from the *Chronicle* of Eusebius. This comparison shows that the "Paschal Chronicle" must sometimes be closer than George's text to Eusebius' original Greek, as far as this can be determined from Jerome's Latin translation or from obvious mistakes.[80] Such a result is what we would expect if the "Paschal Chronicle" transmitted Eusebius' original Greek (probably by way

[76] See above, pp. 41–42 and n. 15. These chroniclers seem also to have had a Syriac source or sources unknown to George.

[77] See Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lxxxiv–lxxxvii, 30 n. 2, 55 n. 2 (where "IV. 4" is a misprint for "IV. 14"), 57 n. 8, 59 n. 1 (under A.M. 5832), etc.

[78] In the unlikely event that Theophilus did begin his chronicle later than the Creation, he would probably have continued some earlier chronicle that did begin with the Creation and was transmitted along with his work.

[79] That this suggestion seems never to have been made before reflects the sharp distinction between modern scholars who have worked on George Syncellus and those who have worked on "Theophanes," the primary exception being Cyril Mango (who even so has dealt chiefly with "Theophanes").

[80] See Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 344 and n. 95 (with references to Jerome's Latin translation of Eusebius), and Mosshammer's preface to his edition of George, pp. xxvi–xxvii, where he notes that George's text of Eusebius is often closer to the Armenian translation, which may well have been translated from a Syriac translation (cf. W. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, pp. lx–lxi).

of Panodorus), while George's text represents a Greek retranslation of Theophilus' Syriac translation of Annianus.[81] In fact, one passage in which George misunderstood Eusebius' *Chronicle* may well have resulted from George's using a text of Eusebius that had been distorted in the process of being translated into Syriac and retranslated into Greek.[82] In this passage George observes that Eusebius wrote "more or less as follows," as if apologizing for being unable to quote Eusebius' Greek exactly.[83]

In the case of lost authors, or authors whom George summarized or paraphrased rather than quoted, we can seldom be sure whether George consulted the original Greek or his Greek translation of Theophilus' Syriac adaptation. The latter is, however, a reasonable assumption whenever George's text closely parallels material attributed to Annianus by Syriac chroniclers. For example, Annianus was presumably George's source for a list of Assyrian kings that agrees with a list that Elijah of Nisibis ascribes to Annianus. Since the first time Michael the Syrian quotes the Book of Enoch he attributes his quotation to Annianus, George's quotations from Enoch and other apocryphal books seem likely to derive from Annianus as well.[84] George makes clear that Annianus discussed Manetho, Alexander Polyhistor, Abydenus, Apollodorus, Eusebius, and Panodorus.[85] Presumably Annianus cited some of or all these authors and his citations were copied in turn by Theophilus and George.

Nonetheless, in some places George's text does appear to reproduce Eusebius' original Greek, though not Eusebius' original arrangement of the material. Consequently George seems not to have relied exclusively on his Greek translation of Theophilus' Syriac chronicle. George can also include accurate quotations of surviving Greek texts by Josephus, Eusebius (his *History of the Church*), John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, Agathias, and Maximus Confessor, and of course the Septuagint and New Testament.[86] George's many discussions of chronological points display a profound and reverent knowledge of the Greek Bible. George even defends the Septuagint when he knows that Africanus and Eusebius had pointed out its departures from the Hebrew Bible.[87] Certainly George did much more than copy and continue his translation of Theophilus of

[81] The problem is again complicated by several more difficulties: Eusebius' original Greek is lost; his language was so formulaic that even a Greek translation of a Syriac translation may sometimes have hit on the original Greek by accident; and Annianus, the "Paschal Chronicle," or George may occasionally have modified Eusebius' wording. For the possibility that the "Paschal Chronicle" depends on Panodorus, see below, p. 61 n. 99.

[82] See W. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, p. 94 n. 3, referring to George Syncellus, pp. 73.12–74.20, a quotation from Eusebius' *Chronicle*. Note that a parallel passage from Pseudo-Eustathius' *Commentary on the Hexaëmeron*, in Migne, *PG* 18, cols. 708A–709A (which expresses the same sense in different words) may represent Eusebius' original Greek.

[83] George Syncellus, p. 73.10: ὧδέ πως γράφων.

[84] See W. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, pp. lxv–lxvii; cf. Michael the Syrian, I, p. 3.

[85] George Syncellus, p. 35.

[86] See Mosshammer's preface to his edition of George, pp. xxix–xxx, and W. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, pp. lx–lxii. Note, however, that W. Adler, *Time*, pp. 165–68, suggests that George took a reference to John Chrysostom from an anthology; here George's direct source may possibly have been Theophilus of Edessa.

[87] See W. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, pp. xlviii–li.

Edessa. Whatever George did to compile his *Selection* took him about five years of work and was still incomplete when he died, around 813.

Because George tells us that Annianus' chronicle was concise and not repetitious, at least by comparison with the chronicle of Panodorus, we cannot plausibly blame Annianus for much of the disorder in George's text.[88] We have no good reason to think that Theophilus of Edessa had left his chronicle unfinished or unrevised, because after concluding it with 750 he lived on until 785.[89] Moreover, the Syriac chroniclers who cite Annianus are much less repetitious than George is. For example, Michael the Syrian includes only one entry each for the death of Socrates, the suicide of Peregrinus, the composition of Oppian's *On Fishing*, and the four principal bishops at the end of the third century, all items for which George gives duplicated and repetitious entries.[90] We should therefore accept the testimony of Theophanes' preface and George's title (*Selection of Chronography*) that George did consult a variety of texts, evidently including one of the later Greek versions of Eusebius' *Chronicle*.

By the time that George started to write, in 808, after living for some twenty-five years in Constantinople, he must have been well acquainted with Byzantine scholars and churchmen in and around the city. He should, therefore, have had access to good libraries there. During his exile, he would have had the help of his friend the prominent abbot Theophanes; and after returning from exile in 811, George would have had the help of at least his high-ranking co-conspirators and his former superior, the patriarch Nicephorus. Even if George had been unable to consult some books that he wanted while he was writing in exile, he could have added references to them after he returned. Although he seldom refers to the books he used, at one point he does mention seeing an excellent manuscript of the Bible from Cappadocian Caesarea that incorporated corrections made by Basil of Caesarea himself.[91] Probably George found this book at Constantinople.

George appears not to have had direct knowledge of the original Greek version of Eusebius' *Chronicle*, which by his time may no longer have been available in the Byzantine capital.[92] Admittedly, besides the books cited by George that survive today, we know from Photius' *Bibliotheca* that the chronicle of Africanus and a number of other rare volumes were preserved in Constantinople or somewhere nearby in the middle of the ninth century.[93] Yet that a book existed somewhere

[88] See above, p. 52 and n. 58.

[89] Bar Hebraeus, pp. 116–17, records that Theophilus died twenty days before the caliph al-Mahdī, in 785. Further on Theophilus, see Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 196–98; while nothing seems to support Howard-Johnston's guess that Theophilus' history "may well" have begun with 590, on this possibility see p. 56 and n. 78 above.

[90] See Michael the Syrian, I, pp. 108 (Socrates), 181 (Peregrinus), 182 (Oppian), and 194 and 199 (bishops, with the bishop of Jerusalem given separately first); cf. p. 53 and n. 67 above for George's repetitions.

[91] George Syncellus, p. 240.12–18.

[92] See W. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, p. lxviii.

[93] See Photius, *Bibliotheca*, codd. 33 (Justus of Tiberias), 34 (Africanus), 68 (Cephalion), 70 (Diodorus), 72 (Ctesias of Cnidus), 82 (Dexippus), 97 (Phlegon of Tralles), 121 (Hippolytus of Rome), and 244 (Diodorus again).

need not mean that George discovered and consulted it. Instead of locating and examining many obscure texts, George may have preferred to save time and effort by borrowing references from his scholarly forebears, as in many cases we know he did. Life is short, and not even modern scholars think that they need to redo all the work of their predecessors.

George handles his material in ways that show he knew the contents of Eusebius' *Chronicle* from at least two of its later revisions. The proof is that he sometimes gives two slightly different accounts or dates for the same event recorded by Eusebius, and sometimes he transmits Eusebius' Greek as if he had retranslated it from a Syriac translation and sometimes not. We have just seen that one of the revisions of Eusebius' *Chronicle* consulted by George was probably the earlier part of his Greek translation of the Syriac chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa, who had used Annianus' version of Eusebius, directly or indirectly. Yet George also had another version of Eusebius that was in Greek and had never passed through a Syriac translation. This Greek version, which George presumably found at Constantinople, seems to have disagreed with Theophilus' Syriac chronicle on too many facts to be the original Greek of Annianus. Therefore, by process of elimination, George's Greek revision of Eusebius' *Chronicle* was probably the chronicle of Panodorus.[94]

The conclusion that George had direct access to the chronicle of Panodorus is plausible in any case. Since the Syrian chroniclers often mention Annianus but never mention Panodorus, Annianus seems not to have made many references to Panodorus that George could have borrowed. Yet despite considering Annianus a better writer and theologian than Panodorus, George refers more often to Panodorus, making criticisms that seem to show knowledge of Panodorus' full original text.[95] George observes that Panodorus' chronicle included "many parts of many sorts, containing many useful things concerning not just historical study but also the movement of the two great luminaries—the sun and moon—presented in tables." George adds that Panodorus was repetitious and much too ready to use material from various pagan authors.[96] Therefore Panodorus seems to have included more excerpts from pagan authors than Annianus did, and many of George's quotations from such authors probably derive from Panodorus. Especially likely to come from Panodorus are the two parallel lists of Egyptian kings that Africanus and Eusebius are said to have adapted differently from Manetho.

If this line of argument is sound, in 808 George took as the starting point for his *Selection* his Greek translation of the Syriac world chronicle of Theophilus of

[94] George's copy of Panodorus' chronicle may have included a continuation by the mysterious Andronicus. (See p. 69 and n. 122 below.)

[95] Cf. W. Adler, *Time*, p. 74: "Syncellus rarely mentions Annianus except in conjunction with Panodorus, his elder contemporary. And when he [George] sets out excerpts from their work, it is Panodorus whom he ordinarily cites." Cf. the direct quotation from Panodorus at George Syncellus, p. 42.2–15.

[96] George Syncellus, pp. 35–36.

Edessa, the earlier part of which was based on the chronicle of Annianus. George then labored to improve and expand Theophilus' chronicle by adding references from Panodorus, the Fathers, and the Bible, and making comments of his own on Annianus, Panodorus, and their sources. In the process, George may have failed to notice that he had added some material from Panodorus which duplicated or contradicted material already present in Theophilus' chronicle. Alternatively, George may have left such duplications and contradictions in his text deliberately with the intention of reconciling them later, just as he sometimes included contradictory versions of his own comments pending a final revision. After he died before making that revision, the duplications and contradictions remained in his text. Though George presumably intended to add a preface to his work, he seems to have meant to dispense with book divisions, which were normally planned from the start.[97] While Eusebius' *Chronicle* had two books (the second of which was simply a chronological table), its later revisions by Panodorus and Annianus seem to have lacked book divisions—as does the "Paschal Chronicle," despite its great length.

George opens his *Selection of Chronography* with the first words of *Genesis*: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Following Annianus, George dates the Creation to a year that we would reckon as 5492 B.C. From the start, he mixes narrative, quotations, and commentary, each usually introduced by a separate heading. Along with *Genesis*, George cites apocryphal books like Jubilees and Enoch as credible authorities. Yet he insists that Africanus and Eusebius were right not to use the chronologies of Berossus and Manetho, who between them claimed to have recorded events going back 480,000 years. At first George forbears to name the Christian historians he criticizes for counting some of the years of Berossus and Manetho as days in an attempt to reconcile them with the Bible, thus dating many Babylonian and Egyptian kings before the Flood. Later, however, George lets slip that these misguided Christian historians were none other than Panodorus and Annianus, and admits that they interpreted biblical years more accurately than Eusebius had done.[98] Since George becomes bogged down in the problems raised by Babylonian and Egyptian records, Enoch and other apocrypha, and Methuselah's age, he has written more than a quarter of his *Selection* before he puts the Flood behind him.

By this time George has already begun to discuss the period after the Flood in his remarks on Egyptian and Babylonian history and on the birthdate of Abraham, with which Eusebius began the chronological table in his *Chronicle*. The pattern of the main part of George's work now emerges: dividing history into periods, for each period the *Selection* combines the lists of kings from Eusebius' Book I, the events from the table in Eusebius' Book II, and additional material, though without dating

[97] The heading at George Syncellus, p. 360.1–9, which should strictly speaking have been omitted or bracketed in the text, is obviously not by George and simply represents the point where a later copyist divided the combined works of George and Theophanes into two MS volumes; cf. W. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, pp. lxxvi–lxxvii.

[98] Cf. George Syncellus, pp. 16–17, 18, 27, and 32–34 (unnamed Christian historians) with 34–37 (finally naming Annianus and Panodorus).

most events to specific years as Eusebius had done. Since the same basic arrangement appears in the parallel parts of Michael the Syrian's chronicle, it was probably the arrangement adopted for this period by their common source, presumably Theophilus of Edessa, and perhaps also by Theophilus' source, Annianus.[99] George continues to discuss chronological problems as he goes, including the dates of the death of Abraham's father, the Exodus, the Judges, various events in early Greek and Roman history, and the Babylonian Captivity. Problems connected with the Captivity bring George more than three-fifths of the way through his *Selection*.

For the period after the Babylonian Captivity, George continues to intersperse sections of king lists, lists of events, textual excerpts, and commentary. Without neglecting the Greeks, Romans, and Persians, he pays most attention to Jewish history. Besides material from Eusebius, Panodorus, and Annianus, George makes much use of Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* and the Books of Maccabees. He refers to Alexander the Great primarily as a chronological marker and to Alexander's Hellenistic successors primarily as background for the chronology of the Jewish High Priests. Naturally the chronology of Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection is a major concern for George, who follows Annianus' argument that Christ was born 5501 years after the Creation, in the year we would call A.D. 9. In this, George and Annianus differed from Panodorus, who had dated Christ's birth seven years earlier. By the time George reaches the Resurrection, his *Selection* is more than four-fifths over.

The final fifth of the *Selection* combines lists of Roman emperors and the bishops of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, events from Eusebius' *Chronicle* and its revisions, brief comments by George, and quotations mostly from Eusebius' *History of the Church*. Most of these are arranged in entries labeled by years, though most years have no entry and most entries include the events of several years. A not particularly significant excerpt from Eusebius' *History of the Church* on the heretic Paul of Samosata concludes the text transmitted under George's name. A little earlier comes the last event formally recorded in the *Selection*, the defeat of the emperor Carinus by Diocletian, whose victory gave him control of the whole Roman empire in 285. While Diocletian's triumph was a date of considerable historical significance, George can hardly have planned for it to conclude his work. It was simply the place where George had to pause in writing up his material when his last illness prevented him from continuing.[100] Since we know that the dying chronicler had enough time to hand over his task and his materials to Theophanes, George probably drove himself to bring his account to a fairly logical stopping place before his death.

George's *Selection of Chronography*, in the unfinished form in which he left it, is one of the most tedious Byzantine historical works to read and one of the most difficult to consult. Its chaotic system of organization would have been

[99] If the conclusion that Annianus did not date many of the events of ancient history by years is correct, the "Paschal Chronicle," which usually does date events by years modified from those in Eusebius, presumably depended on a post-Eusebian chronicler who was not Annianus. Panodorus is the most likely candidate.

[100] Cf. W. Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, p. xlviii: "The manner in which Synkellos' chronicle concludes gives the distinct impression of a work broken off *mediis rebus*."

particularly daunting in Byzantine times, when its manuscripts lacked an index or table of contents. Even apart from all its repetitions and contradictions (many of which George would presumably have removed if he had revised the text), the narrative, the argument, and even the lists are broken up into fragments that are hard to assimilate and still harder to compare with each other. Only after much searching, rereading, and reflection—and perhaps not even then—does the reader come to see why George presented his material in the way he did and what he really thought about it. Modern scholars are still trying to determine which sources he used and what they were originally like. In comparison with George's *Selection*, the complex chronological table of Eusebius and the unadorned entries of the "Paschal Chronicle" are positively straightforward to use.

George seems to have complicated his task by omitting many of the dates that appeared in his sources. Eusebius arranged his *Chronicle* in dated annual entries, an arrangement evidently retained by Panodorus but only in part by Annianus, whom George preferred to Panodorus. Seemingly following Annianus' chronicle as transmitted by Theophilus of Edessa, George uses annual entries only in the last part of his work, and even then simply inserts occasional annual headings at appropriate places in his lists of emperors, bishops, and events. George could presumably have dated most imperial and episcopal successions and historical events to the year by consulting Panodorus' chronicle but chose not to do so. While George may possibly have thought that he could write more elegantly or more coherently if he left out most dates, his main reason for omitting them was probably that he was often unsure which dates were correct, because his sources disagreed and the earliest period of history was plagued by chronological uncertainties. Yet though George's decision not to date most events in annual entries may show his scrupulousness as a scholar, it deprived him of a clear principle of organization, for which he never found a satisfactory substitute.

When George originally set out to expand and revise the Greek translation of the Syriac chronicle that he already had, he seems to have assumed that correcting and expanding it would be fairly easy. He apparently expected to finish his work within a few months, so that his chronicle, begun no earlier than February 808, would come to its conclusion before that September, still within the year he reckoned as A.M. 6300. As George worked, however, he began to realize the magnitude of his task. By the middle of the *Selection*, he describes himself as "having toiled greatly over reconciling the two kingdoms of the Hebrews that were divided after Solomon," and further on as "having taken pains to show that A.M. 5170 is the date of the death of Alexander of Macedon." Later he says of the circumstances that led to the accession of Herod the Great, "These materials have not been simple for me to prepare," and later still he adds, "I have expended all the labor of this book" to demonstrate that the Creation, Incarnation, and Resurrection each fell on a Sunday.[101] George was neither the first nor the last author to underestimate the difficulty of writing readable and accurate history.

[101] George Syncellus, pp. 240.2–3, 315.1–2, 362.11, and 389.20–25.

Although modern scholars may object to George's insistence that the Greek Bible was the touchstone by which all other sources should be judged, this principle made good sense for a Byzantine who believed that the Scriptures were the inspired word of God. Even as a matter of method, to decide that the most comprehensive, self-consistent, and theologically orthodox historical source was more reliable than the others was at least as defensible as to try to resolve various discrepancies among contradictory and dubious sources one by one. George also understood that the text of the Bible could have been corrupted by copyists, so that it required emendation. As a result, he could logically have conjectured that the Septuagint had translated a Hebrew text that was more accurate than those consulted by Africanus and Eusebius. Moreover, George recognized that even uncorrupted biblical passages could be unclear or misleading, so that they needed extensive interpretation if they were to be correctly understood.

George must have found the problem of how to organize his *Selection* intractable. His almost unattainable ideal was to write a coherent text without sacrificing the precision of direct quotations and tabular presentation, which chroniclers had favored ever since Eusebius' *Chronicle*. Even today, with a long tradition of historical writing to provide guidance and models, modern scholars who finish their histories often fail to produce prose that is simultaneously readable, precise, and accurate. Reconciling the conflicting demands of a narrative history and a reference work has always been especially difficult. The easiest and most obvious means of making George's text flow more smoothly would have been to omit or to paraphrase most or all of his quotations and lists. Yet such a drastic simplification, as George himself surely saw, would greatly have reduced the value of the *Selection* as a source both of historical information and of excerpts of lost texts, not just for us but for Byzantine readers as well. If George had lived to revise and complete his *Selection*, it would probably have had fewer repetitions and inconsistencies but much the same format and style. Though his unrevised *Selection* largely fails both as scholarship and as literature, the failure remains an honorable and instructive one. In fact, like some modern scholars, many Byzantine readers seem to have been favorably impressed by a work that was almost unintelligible but full of erudite references to obscure secondary literature, on the principle that the unintelligibility must be a sign of the author's superior intelligence.

Theophanes and the *Chronography*

We know more about Theophanes Confessor as a man than we can reasonably guess about George.[102] We have two good sources for Theophanes' life: a funeral

[102] On Theophanes, see above all Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. xliii–c (to which the following discussion is much indebted), but also Ševčenko, "Search," pp. 287–89, Kazhdan, *History* I, pp. 215–34, Rochow, *Byzanz*, Yannopoulos, "Vicissitudes," Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 268–312 (and my comments in Treadgold, "Darkness," pp. 584–90), Sophoulis, *Byzantium*, pp. 5–22, Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* II, pp. 117–41, Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 334–39, and *PmbZ* I, *Prolegomena*, pp. 13–14.

oration delivered in 822 by his fellow abbot Theodore of Studius and a saint's life probably written a few years later by the future patriarch of Constantinople Methodius.[103] Theodore knew Theophanes personally. Methodius, though he had probably never met Theophanes, must have spoken with people who had known him. While Theodore and Methodius agree on most points, when they disagree Theodore seems to be the more reliable, because he knew Theophanes better and his work is more specific and less rhetorical. Moreover, Methodius' chronology, besides being self-contradictory, indicates that Theophanes became permanently bedridden with kidney disease in either 809/10 or 811/812.[104] Yet in the preface to the *Chronography*, which cannot be earlier than 813 and probably dates from late 814 or early 815, Theophanes makes no mention of his illness, which would presumably have prevented him from doing the extensive research that he claims he did. More plausibly, Theodore mentions Theophanes' kidney disease only after recording Leo V's reintroduction of Iconoclasm in spring 815.[105] Neither Theodore nor Methodius ever mentions the *Chronography* or George Syncellus.

Theophanes was evidently born in late 759 or early 760 in Constantinople.[106] His parents, Isaac and Theodote, were wealthy aristocrats. Isaac found favor with the current iconoclast emperor, Constantine V, who appointed him drungary of the Aegean Sea, a military governorship of moderate importance suitable for a rising young man. Isaac, however, died when Theophanes was a boy. The son grew up to be handsome and athletic, and loved to ride and hunt. His rather basic education seems to have been meant to prepare him for a career in the army or navy rather than the bureaucracy. Apparently before Constantine V died in 775, Theophanes received the court rank of strator, a high honor for a teenager.[107] At nineteen, after the death of his mother, he married Megalo, the daughter of Leo the Patrician, a favorite of the new emperor, Leo IV. Theophanes was made

For a refutation of Paul Speck's theory that Theophanes shared a "dossier" with Nicephorus, see Lilie, *Byzanz*, pp. 384–408, which also rules out many of Speck's other conclusions about Theophanes.

[103] See Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. xliii–lii, and *PmbZ* I, no. 8017 (Theophanes).

[104] Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. xlix–l, are less sure about preferring Theodore, pointing out that he "may well have confused his memories." Note, however, that Methodius' *Life* says Theophanes was twenty-one at the death of Leo IV, in September 780 (chap. 19, implying a birthdate of 759/60), and fifty-three at the accession of Leo V, in July 813 (chap. 45, implying the same birthdate), but forty-nine at the accession of Michael I, in October 811 (chap. 42, implying a birthdate of 761/62), and fifty when he became permanently bedridden (chaps. 43 and 44, therefore in 809/10 or 811/12). My account therefore follows Theodore rather than Methodius when the two disagree. *PmbZ* I, no. 8017, gives a full listing of the sources for Theophanes' life and discusses some of the problems. On the rhetorical character of Methodius' *Life*, see also Kazhdan, *History* I, pp. 372–74.

[105] Theodore, *Panegyric*, chap. 12, refers to Theophanes' suffering from "kidney disease and a chronic wasting away" (νεφριτικοῦ πάθους καὶ χρονίου μαρασμοῦ); here I take "chronic" to mean "unremitting" rather than "of long standing."

[106] Yannopoulos, "Lieu," raises the possibility that Theophanes may have been born on Chios while his father was drungary of the Aegean Sea; but in any case Theophanes was raised and educated in Constantinople.

[107] For the rank, see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, p. 298.

commander of the fort of Cyzicus, which he restored at his own expense. Like his father, he had embarked on the career of an aristocratic military officer.

Nonetheless, when Irene and Constantine VI succeeded Leo IV in 780, Theophanes was one of a number of iconophiles who were inspired by the new regime to take monastic vows.[108] Persuading his wife to become a nun on the island of Principo, near Constantinople, he gave up his wealth, rank, and prospects, and entered a monastery, evidently on the island of Calonymus, in the Sea of Marmara. He received his tonsure from a famous monk, Theodore "the One-Handed."[109] A few years later the monastery's abbot died, and Theophanes was himself chosen abbot, probably around the age of twenty-seven. Yet he seems to have found some of his monks recalcitrant, and soon he sought greater tranquility by leaving for Mount Sigriane, on the nearby Bithynian coast. There he founded his own monastery, Megas Agros, which Theodore of Studius describes as a delightful place, and became its abbot. Seemingly not long afterward, in 787, Theophanes attended the Council of Nicaea, which officially restored the icons.[110] At this time of explosive growth of monasteries after the antimonastic measures of Constantine V, few seem to have cared about the rules that monks should not move from one monastery to another, that abbots should be priests, or that priests should be at least thirty years old.[111]

Except for his piety, nothing in Theophanes' background particularly fitted him for monastic life. Unused to manual labor and lacking a literary education, he fulfilled his obligation to do useful work by teaching himself, with difficulty, to copy manuscripts. He appears to have got along well with the monks who followed him to Megas Agros, which became a large community. A sociable man, he liked to visit and talk with the monks in neighboring monasteries. He was, however, disappointed at the lack of monastic zeal shown by his "sister," probably meaning his former wife, Megalo, whom he wrote letters of exhortation but refused

[108] See Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 63–65. Theodore implies, and Methodius states, that Theophanes had never consummated his marriage.

[109] Perhaps Theodore (*PmbZ* I, no. 7577) had become famous for having his hand cut off under Constantine V for writing against Iconoclasm.

[110] Theodore, *Panegyric*, chaps. 5 and 6. See Janin, *Églises*, pp. 157 and 202 (Calonymus) and 195–99 (Mt. Sigriane and Megas Agros). Methodius, *Life*, chaps. 20–24, says rather that Theophanes entered the Monastery of Polichnium (Janin, *Églises*, pp. 207–9) on Mt. Sigriane, then moved to Calonymus, where he stayed for six years before going to another monastery on Mt. Sigriane and then moving to Megas Agros before the Council of Nicaea, in September and October of 787; but this would leave almost no time for Theophanes' residence in the first two monasteries on Mt. Sigriane, about which Methodius is probably mistaken, especially because he gives no reason for Theophanes to have changed monasteries three times in this short period rather than just once.

[111] Cf. Treadgold, "Prophecies," pp. 230–31 (citing the contemporary examples of John of Cathara, Hilarion of Dalmatus, Peter of Atroa, and Methodius). Perhaps Theophanes was ordained priest before he was thirty, or perhaps he became an abbot before becoming a priest. Such an irregularity may be the reason Theodore of Studius fails to mention Theophanes' presence as abbot at the ecumenical council of 787, when he was at most twenty-eight, while Methodius, who does mention Theophanes' presence at the council as abbot, is vague about his age at the time. An alternative would be to suppose that Theophanes actually did not attend the council and became an abbot in 789 or later.

to see for the rest of her life.[112] With little interest in church politics, he took no stand on the divorce and remarriage of Constantine VI in 795, to the chagrin of Theodore of Studius, who was exiled for his own vocal opposition. Theodore was also embarrassed by the fact that as a monk Theophanes grew stout. Theodore insists that this was the result of bodily metabolism rather than overeating and that, besides, Theophanes became very thin during his later illness.

In early 808, as we have seen, George Syncellus seems to have been exiled for conspiracy to Megas Agros. He and Theophanes evidently became intimate friends during George's three years of internment, when George was working on his chronicle. Theophanes, a friendly and hospitable man, evidently looked up to his erudite guest, who was some fifteen years older, much better traveled, more experienced in church affairs, and better educated. The two men seem to have kept in touch after George returned to Constantinople in 811. About 813, when George realized he was dying, he either retired to Megas Agros or summoned Theophanes to the capital and entreated him to complete the unfinished chronicle from the materials George had assembled. These probably included extensive notes, George's translation of the chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa with its continuations to 780 and 813, and other books. Theophanes felt unable to refuse. After almost thirty years of copying manuscripts, he had learned enough about history and literature that he could appreciate what George was trying to do and could make and keep his promise to continue it, if not as George would have done it. Theophanes must have worked rapidly, completing most of his task within the single year of 814, before Leo V held a council that banned icons in April 815.[113]

Around that time Theophanes' kidney disease forced him to take to his bed, but he summoned the other abbots of Bithynia to his bedside, where he exhorted them to resist Iconoclasm. Near the beginning of 816, the emperor had the ailing Theophanes brought to Constantinople on a litter to be interrogated by the iconoclast abbot John the Grammarian. A learned and ingenious theologian, John hoped to convert iconophiles to Iconoclasm by debating with them. Probably trying to establish that the human body of Christ, which could be depicted in an icon, was distinct from Christ's Godhead, which could not, John asked Theophanes, "When the body of Christ lay in the tomb, where was the Divinity?" Theophanes replied, "Enemy of God, the Divinity is everywhere, except in your heart." Angered by this retort, the emperor had the severely ill Theophanes imprisoned for two years in the Palace of Eleutherius, in the capital. In February 818 the emperor had Theophanes transferred to the Aegean island of Samothrace, where

[112] See Theodore, *Panegyric*, chap. 9, and cf. *PmbZ* I, no. 8017, p. 607; Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. xlv n. 14, are uncertain whether this "sister" was Megalo or an actual sister of Theophanes named Maria—who, however, seems likely to have been not Theophanes' sister but Megalo's.

[113] Though Theophanes himself, rather than a later redactor, probably added the correct length of the patriarch Nicephorus' patriarchate to the heading of A.M. 6298 after Nicephorus' deposition on March 13, 815 (cf. Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. lxxii), the work may otherwise have been complete before that date, because even an invalid could have made or ordered such a minute addition.

he died on March 12 at the age of fifty-nine, his death probably hastened by the hardships of his voyage.[114] Iconophiles venerated him as a confessor, meaning one who had suffered for the faith. After the assassination of Leo V, Theophanes' corpse was returned to Megas Agros and buried there in 822, when Theodore of Studius delivered his panegyric.

The full title of Theophanes' continuation is *Chronography of 528 Years, beginning from the First Year of Diocletian until the Second Year of Michael* [I] *and Theophylact His Son (That is, from the Year of the World 5777 to the Year of the World 6305 according to the Alexandrians, but 6321 according to the Romans)*. The attribution to "Theophanes, Sinner, Monk, and Abbot of Agros" is presumably by the author himself.[115] After the preface, which explains how Theophanes inherited his task from George, the *Chronography* opens with a brief genealogical table of the families of the tetrarchs from Diocletian to Constantine I. Then the chronicle assumes the format it will follow throughout, with annual headings. These headings specify the year from the Creation (starting with A.M. 5777, meaning A.D. 284/85), the year from the Incarnation, and the regnal years of the Roman emperor, the king of Persia (later the Arab caliph), and the bishops of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem (with Byzantium added in 317/18 and renamed Constantinople in 324/25). For the years with no new ruler or bishop, these headings are usually abbreviated to a simple sequence of numbers representing the regnal years. No more information follows the headings for the first three years after 284/85, or indeed for thirteen of the first twenty-five years of the *Chronography*.

After this somewhat hesitant start, the *Chronography* gradually becomes more detailed. Entries with nothing but headings become rare, and the last one is for 436/37. The entries fitfully coalesce into a sort of loose narrative by concentrating on certain topics, mostly in church history. First the entries take up the Great Persecution, then the triumph of Constantine, and later the struggle against the Arian heresy, interrupted by the emperor Julian's return to paganism but brought to a triumphant conclusion by Theodosius I. With the end of the fourth century, the coverage becomes more abundant and more varied, with greater attention to secular subjects like wars with the Persians and Huns. Yet until the beginning of the sixth century the focus remains on ecclesiastical history, recounted as a series of struggles between good and evil: John Chrysostom against his enemies, then different orthodox churchmen against the heresiarch Nestorius, the Monophysites, and the wicked emperors Zeno and Anastasius I, who compromised with the Monophysites.

For the sixth century, Theophanes' coverage expands a bit more, especially in dealing with warfare, though the Monophysite conflict persists in the

[114] Theodore, *Panegyric*, chap. 16, may be counting inclusively when he says that Theophanes died at sixty, though Theodore must be rounding up when he says that Theophanes had been a monk for forty years, since the exact number was thirty-eight. Theodore may have used approximate numbers in an attempt to conceal that Theophanes had become an abbot before he was thirty. (Cf. p. 65 n. 111 above.)

[115] The final words, "and Confessor," must of course be a later addition.

background. The empire's wars with the Persians are a recurring theme, alongside wars with the Avars and rioting by the circus factions of the Blues and the Greens. Justinian I's glorious conquest of northwest Africa from the Vandals is the subject of the longest entry in the whole *Chronography*, that for 533/34. Later the murder of the emperor Maurice, in 602, is depicted as the fatal turning point that it was. The wars with the Persians, Avars, Bulgars, and particularly the Arabs during the seventh century receive fairly detailed treatment, along with the empire's tumultuous internal politics and the struggle of the orthodox against the new heresy of Monotheletism. For the eighth century, the main subjects are wars with the Arabs and the resistance of the orthodox to Iconoclasm. The *Chronography* concludes with the allegedly disastrous reign of the diabolical Nicephorus I and the Bulgar raids that followed it.

Even more than most Byzantine chronicles, Theophanes' *Chronography* is a pastiche of its sources.[116] Yet the majority of those sources are at least partly lost and more or less difficult to identify. Only two of them are fully preserved: the *History* of Theophylact Simocatta and Books I–IV of Procopius' *Wars*. (Theophanes seems not to have had Books V–VIII of the *Wars*, which were normally copied in the second of two volumes.) A good deal remains of four more of Theophanes' sources: the history of John Malalas in our somewhat abridged version, the poetry of George of Pisidia in substantial part, and the histories of John of Antioch and Theodore the Lector in considerable fragments. A seventh source of Theophanes is probably an unidentified work used by Alexander the Monk for his treatise *On the Cross*.[117] As we have already seen, two more of Theophanes' sources were probably the lost history of Trajan the Patrician and its continuation, both of which Nicephorus also used in his *Concise History*. We have also seen that another of Theophanes' sources appears to be the Greek translation and continuation of the Syriac chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa, which contributed passages in Theophanes that are paralleled in surviving Eastern chronicles. Theophanes must have made very extensive use of this translation, though he abridged some parts and omitted others. The full text of the translation seems to have been preserved at Constantinople, probably in the imperial library, where it was used in the tenth century by scholars working for the emperor Constantine VII.[118]

Another major source of the *Chronography* has been identified as a chronicle chiefly concerned with Alexandria and presumably written there. Theophanes seems to have used this chronicle for the first time in his entry for 293/94, practically at the beginning of the *Chronography*, and for the last time in his entry

[116] Cf. the discussion of sources in Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lxxiv–xcv, which has served as the basis of the somewhat different interpretation given here.

[117] See Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lxxvi–lxxviii (no. 4). Alexander, however, preserves a large part of his lost source.

[118] For Theophanes' use of Theophilus, see Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses*, pp. 222 (and n. 91) and 230–31 (and n. 117), citing Constantine VII's *De Administrando Imperio* 14 and 21.49–110, chapters that seem to derive from the original translation of Theophilus even though they show some parallels with Theophanes.

for 516/17.[119] We have seen that George Syncellus made extensive use of material from the Alexandrian chroniclers Panodorus and Annianus, and that George probably knew Panodorus' work directly and Annianus' through the chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa.[120] Since we know that George transmitted whatever sources he had to Theophanes, we can reasonably assume that Theophanes had indirect knowledge of Annianus and direct knowledge of Panodorus. We also know that chronicles continued to be written at Alexandria after Panodorus and Annianus, including the fragmentary *Alexandrian World Chronicle* and the defective Latin translation known as the *Excerpta Barbari* ("Excerpts of the Barbarian"), both of which probably incorporate and continue material from Panodorus or Annianus.[121] Perhaps George passed on to Theophanes a copy of Panodorus' chronicle with a continuation by an unknown Alexandrian to 518, the end of the reign of Anastasius I, or 527, the end of the reign of Justin I. This Alexandrian may possibly have been the obscure Andronicus, who is said to have written a chronicle under Justinian (527–65) with a chronology different from those of Eusebius and Annianus—but not necessarily from that of Panodorus.[122]

Besides these eleven sources, we may postulate others for various portions of Theophanes' *Chronography*. Since so much of the eleven sources has been lost, however, we cannot always be sure whether passages in the *Chronography* derive from lost parts of one of the eleven or from other lost sources. For example, passages in the *Chronography* that evidently derive from a lost Arian history of the fourth century probably show not direct use of that work but use of Theophilus of Edessa or the source of Alexander the Monk, each of which depended on the Arian history.[123] Likewise, parallels between the *Chronography* and an anti-Monothelete sermon by Anastasius of Sinai, which some have ascribed to a hypothetical anti-Monothelete tract, probably show use of Anastasius' sermon by Trajan the Patrician,

[119] Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lxxviii–lxxx (no. 5).

[120] See above, pp. 56–59.

[121] See Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 124–25.

[122] Andronicus is cited by Dionysius of Tel-Maḥrē, Michael the Syrian, Bar Hebraeus, and Elijah of Nisibis; see Serruys, "Canons," pp. 28–36. Michael and Bar Hebraeus may have known Andronicus through the mediation of Dionysius of Tel-Maḥrē, whose preface mentions Andronicus as a source (Palmer, *Seventh Century*, p. 91).

[123] See Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lxxvi–lxxviii (Alexander the Monk), lxxx–lxxxi (the Arian history), and lxxxiv–lxxxv (Theophilus of Edessa?). A doctoral dissertation now being written under my direction by Joseph Reidy argues that the lost Arian history was in fact two histories. The first, a continuation of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Chronicle* to 350 (to be identified with the Antiochene chronicle reconstructed by Burgess, *Studies*, pp. 113–305), Reidy tentatively attributes to Eusebius of Emesa; the second history, which evidently continued the first history to 378, I would tentatively attribute to Euzoïus of Antioch. Jerome, *On Famous Men*, §§ 91 and 113, describes Eusebius of Emesa as having written a history and having died at Antioch, where the first history was apparently written, and Euzoïus as having written many works and having restored Eusebius of Caesarea's library; both writers were moderate Arians. Since both histories seem to have been used by Jerome for his *Chronicle*, we should expect to find their authors described in his *On Famous Men*, in which he intended to include all significant Christian writers.

Theophanes' main source at that point.[124] Similarly, some of the information on the seventh century in the *Chronography* that appears to derive from the state archives probably shows use of the archives by Trajan, not Theophanes, who is unlikely to have done archival research.[125]

The probability that both Malalas and John of Antioch plagiarized Eustathius of Epiphania's *Chronological Epitome* until about 518 has important implications for determining how many sources Theophanes used directly.[126] Clear parallels show that for the years after 518 Theophanes drew on the accounts of both John of Antioch and Malalas, which after that date were quite different from each other. Theophanes used Malalas' work until it ended in 565 and John's work, which had little to say about the sixth century, from about 600 until it ended in 610. For some years before 600, Theophanes chiefly used Theophylact Simocatta. Theophanes' confused coverage of the period between 565 and the beginning of the main part of Theophylact's history in 582 probably reflects John of Antioch's neglect of those years.[127] Before 518, determining whether Theophanes used Malalas or John of Antioch is difficult, for several reasons. Not only were their two plagiarizations of Eustathius similar in content, but Theophanes' summarizing and paraphrasing tend to frustrate attempts to distinguish their differing styles. Moreover, most of this part of John of Antioch is lost to us, along with some of this part of Malalas. The probability remains that Theophanes consulted both John of Antioch and Malalas for the period before 518.[128]

Unlike John of Antioch and Malalas (but like George Syncellus), Theophanes seldom cites sources by name. Most of the fifteen or so citations Theophanes does include seem to be copied from citations in his sources, and thus represent texts he did not know directly.[129] Theophanes cites the lost fifth-century historian Priscus by name (misspelling him "Persicus"), and shows at least indirect knowledge of

[124] Cf. Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. lxxxvii (no. 15), with Treadgold, "Trajan," pp. 602–4 and 617.

[125] Cf. Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lxxxii (no. 13) and lxxxviii (no. 20), with Treadgold, "Trajan," pp. 608–11 and 617–18.

[126] See Treadgold, "Byzantine World Histories" (on the whole problem) and *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 114–20 (on Eustathius), 235–56 (on Malalas), and 311–29 (on John of Antioch); and cf. above, p. 4 n. 13.

[127] Note, however, the parallel between Theophanes A.M. 6063 (p. 244.2–5; A.D. 570/71) and John of Antioch fr. 315 Roberto.

[128] See Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. 166 n. 1, 167 n. *a*, and 210–11 and nn. *b*, *c*, and 3; cf. the index of Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta*, pp. 632–34 (parallels between John of Antioch and Malalas), with p. 647 (parallels between John of Antioch and Theophanes), though some of the passages in Theophanes paralleled in John of Antioch but not in Malalas probably come from another source than John (e.g., Theodore the Lector).

[129] The citations are at Theophanes A.M. 5787 (Eusebius, *History of the Church*), 5796 (Eusebius and Gelasius of Caesarea), 5816 (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* at p. 21.25–27, and Rufinus of Aquileia at p. 24.17–18), 5818 (Theodoret), 5827 (Eusebius), 5829 (Eusebius, *Against Marcellinus*, and Socrates), 5869 (Sozomen), 5870 (Trajan the Patrician), 5901 (Sozomen), 5950 (Peter the Priest of Alexandria), 5961 ("Persicus the Thracian," evidently Priscus), and 6102 (George of Pisidia). Apparently Theophanes cited Trajan and George of Pisidia directly, Priscus from John of Antioch, and the others from Theodore the Lector.

material from Priscus, Eustathius, and the fourth-century Latin historian Eutropius that cannot be found in our text of Malalas.[130] Yet by Theophanes' time the histories of Priscus and Eustathius were rare, though a copy of the former survived to be excerpted for Constantine VII in the tenth century and some of the latter probably survived to be consulted by Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus in the fourteenth century. Neither Theophanes nor George Syncellus appears to have known Latin, the language of Eutropius' history. While a Greek translation of Eutropius had been made by a certain Paeanius and is preserved today, Theophanes seems not to have used it, because he repeats information in the Latin text of Eutropius that Paeanius omits.[131]

On the other hand, both Priscus and Eutropius have been identified as indirect sources of John of Antioch, who knew them from Eustathius.[132] Since Theophanes is known to have made use of the text of John of Antioch later, the most likely explanation is that Theophanes knew the works of Priscus and Eutropius from the complete text of John of Antioch. In fact, Theophanes' text probably includes many hitherto unidentified fragments of John's plagiarization of Eustathius, though Theophanes seems sometimes to have adapted John's text freely. Such fragments can often be identified because they show parallels to previously known fragments of Priscus or to the texts of Procopius, Evagrius, and Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus, who all drew on Eustathius.[133] Many points must, however, remain uncertain in the absence of a more thorough reexamination of the problem of Eustathius of Epiphania and his use by John of Antioch and Malalas.

Until Priscus' history ended around 474 it was probably the original source of most of these fragments of John of Antioch, though some material may have been added by Eustathius himself, who was born around 455.[134] Eustathius would also

130 See, e.g., Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lxxvi (no. 3, on Eutropius); 165 n. 3, 166 nn. *a* and *b*, 181 nn. *a*, *b*, 3, 5, and 7, 182 n. 2, 183 nn. *a* and 1, and 184 nn. *a* and 4 (on Priscus); and 181 nn. 5 and 7, 182 n. 2, 183 n. 1, 184 n. 2, 195 n. *a*, 201–2 nn. *b* and 11, 209 nn. *c*, *i*, and 10, p. 211 n. 4, 212 n. 2, and 224–25 n. 7 (on Eustathius).

131 Cf. Theophanes A.M. 5793 (A.D. 300/301), where Theophanes reports that Galerius fought a battle with the Persian king Narses "around Callinicum and Carrhae," a fact recorded by Eutropius IX.24 but omitted in Paeanius' translation of that passage. Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta*, pp. cxxxi–cxxxiv, shows that a lost translation by Capito of Lycia was probably not used by John and that John is mostly independent of Paeanius. (I suspect that the two similarities Roberto cites between John and Paeanius are merely coincidental.)

132 See Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta*, pp. cxxxi–cxxxiv (Eutropius) and cxliv–cxlvi (Priscus), and Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 317 n. 22.

133 See Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 116 and n. 136 (where in view of the evidence in Theophanes I now believe I was mistaken to think that "Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus appears to have had no direct access to Eustathius' work").

134 See Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 99–101 (on the terminal date of Priscus) and 116–17 (on Eustathius' birthdate). Possible fragments of Eustathius before 474 are in Theophanes A.M. 5895 (with parallels to Malalas and Nicephorus Callistus; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. 118–19 nn. *a*, 6, and 10), 5900 (with parallels to Procopius and Nicephorus Callistus; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 124 n. *b*), 5925 (with parallels to Nicephorus Callistus and Evagrius; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 142 nn. *a–d*), 5931 (with parallels to Procopius, but including material not in Procopius; see Mango and Scott,

have been the original source of most of the later fragments of John of Antioch that appear in Theophanes.[135] Eustathius is particularly likely to have been the

Chronicle, pp. 147–48 nn. *a–g*, 1, 2, 4, 10, 14, 15, and 17), 5936 (with a parallel to Malalas; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 151 nn. *a* and 1, suggesting "Theophanes' source was not Malalas but some lost user of Priscus," whom I would identify with Eustathius), 5937 (with a parallel to Malalas; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 152 n. *a*), 5940 (with parallels to Nicephorus Callistus, Malalas, and Evagrius; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. 155–56 nn. *a–c*, 1, 7, and 9), 5941 (with parallels to Evagrius and Nicephorus Callistus; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. 157–58 nn. *a*, *b*, *e*, and 5), 5942 (with parallels to Nicephorus Callistus and Priscus; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. 159–60 nn. *a*, *c*, *d*, 1, and 11), 5943 (with parallels to Nicephorus Callistus and Evagrius; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 162 nn. *d–h*, *j*, and 1), 5945 (with parallels to Nicephorus Callistus and to Evagrius citing Priscus; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 165 nn. *d*, *e*, 3, and 4), 5946 (with parallels to Priscus, Nicephorus Callistus, and John of Antioch; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 166 nn. *a–c* and 1), 5947 (with parallels to Nicephorus Callistus and John of Antioch; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 167 nn. *a* and 2), 5950 (with parallels to Malalas, Evagrius, and Nicephorus Callistus; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. 170–71 nn. *b*, *d*, *f*, and 4), 5952 (with a parallel to Evagrius; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 173 nn. 1 and 2), 5953 (with parallels to Evagrius and Malalas; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 173 n. *a*), 5957 (with a parallel to Evagrius; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 178 n. *b*), 5960 (with a parallel to Malalas; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 179 n. *a*), 5961 (with a citation of "Persicus" and parallels to Priscus, Procopius, and Nicephorus Callistus; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 181 nn. *a–d*, 3, 5, and 7, noting, "The most likely intermediary source is Eustathios of Epiphaneia"), 5962 (see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 182 n. 2, suggesting Priscus as a source by way of Eustathius), 5963 (with a parallel to Priscus; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 183 nn. *a* and 1), 5964 (with parallels to Priscus, Procopius, and Nicephorus Callistus; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 184 nn. *a–c* and 2), 5965 (with parallels to Nicephorus Callistus and Evagrius; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 186 nn. *a* and *b*), and 5966 (with parallels to Malalas, Nicephorus Callistus, and Evagrius; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 187 nn. *a*, *c*, *d*, and 5).

[135] Possible fragments of Eustathius after 474 are in Theophanes A.M. 5967 (with parallels to Evagrius, Nicephorus Callistus, and Procopius; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. 188–89 nn. *c*, *g*, and 7), 5968 (with parallels to Nicephorus Callistus and Procopius; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. 190–91 nn. *b–e*, 6, and 7), 5969 (with parallels to Nicephorus Callistus, Malalas, and Evagrius; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 192 nn. *a–d* and *f*), 5970 (with a parallel to Evagrius; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 194 nn. *c*, 1, 3, and 4), 5971 (with a parallel to Nicephorus Callistus citing Eustathius; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 195 nn. *a* and 2), 5972 (with parallels to Malalas and Nicephorus Callistus; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 196 nn. *a–d* and p. 73 n. 136 below), 5973 (with parallels to Evagrius and Malalas; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 197 nn. *a* and *c*), 5974 (with a parallel to Malalas; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 198 n. *a*), 5975 (with a distant parallel to Malalas; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 199 n. *a*), 5976 (with a parallel to Malalas; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 200 n. *a*), 5977 (with parallels to Evagrius and Nicephorus Callistus from Eustathius; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. 201–2 nn. *a*, *b*, and 11), 5980 (with a parallel to Malalas; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 204 n. *b*), 5981 (with a parallel to Nicephorus Callistus; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 205 n. *b*), 5982 (with parallels to Nicephorus Callistus and Malalas; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 207 nn. *a–c* and *e*), 5983 (with parallels to Nicephorus Callistus, Evagrius citing Eustathius, and Malalas; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 209 nn. *a–e*, *g*, *i*, *j*, and 10), 5984 (with parallels to Malalas, John of Antioch, Evagrius, and Nicephorus Callistus; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. 210–11 nn. *a–c*, *e*, 3, and 4, noting "Presumably here Eustathios of Epiphaneia is the common source for

original source of a passage in Theophanes that praises the usurper Leontius, whose rebellion against Zeno Eustathius seems to have supported, to the ruin of his career.[136] While Theophanes' source for most of these passages from Priscus or Eustathius was probably John of Antioch, Malalas is also a possible source in some cases, since he too plagiarized Eustathius. Like Theodore the Lector, John of Antioch (and Malalas) offered a convenient summary of the works of many historians that could save the time and trouble required to read them in the original.

We should, however, not be too eager to minimize the number of Theophanes' conjectural sources if we have good reasons to postulate more than the eleven already mentioned. For instance, Theophanes' detailed and favorable narrative of the career of Leo III before his accession seems not to be derived from Trajan the Patrician, because all this material is absent from Nicephorus' *Concise History*, which depends heavily on Trajan. As has been suggested above, the source may have been an encomium of Leo delivered on a ceremonial occasion soon after his accession, in 717.[137] Similarly, Theophanes includes some inaccurate information on Western events in the early eighth century that is independent of Nicephorus and presumably comes from a source different from the continuation of Trajan, perhaps a Western acquaintance of George Syncellus.[138] In addition, Theophanes is more likely to have used George of Pisidia's poetry alongside official dispatches from Heraclius' campaigns than to have used a single "official history" of the campaigns that mixed poetry and prose, as has been suggested.[139]

One last hypothetical source is a lost biography of an iconophile martyr. For the years 775 and 780, the later chronicles of Pseudo-Symeon and George Cedrenus seem to have drawn independent information from a source also used for Theophanes' *Chronography*. The first passage described how in 775 the dying Constantine V let slip that he had hidden a large sum of money with Theophanes the Chamberlain, who then revealed it to Constantine's son Leo IV. The second passage recorded how

Theophanes and Evag[rius]"), 5985 (with parallels to Evagrius and Nicephorus Callistus; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 212 nn. *b*, 2, and 3), 5990 (with a parallel to Evagrius; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 217 n. *a*), 5991 (with a parallel to Evagrius; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 218 n. *a*), 5996 (with parallels to Evagrius and Procopius; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. 224–25 nn. *b* and 7, suggesting that Eustathius was the source of Theophanes, Evagrius, Procopius, and Zacharias of Mytilene, though this seems chronologically unlikely for Zacharias), 5997 (with parallels to Procopius and Malalas; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. 226–27 nn. *a*, *b*, 1, and 3), and 5998 (with parallels to Malalas and Procopius; see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. 228 nn. *a* and *c*).

[136] See Theophanes A.M. 5972 (p. 128.7–12); for Eustathius' support of Leontius, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 117 and 326–27. The praise for Leontius is omitted by Malalas XV.13; while it is also absent from John of Antioch fr. 306.10–18 Roberto, Theophanes—who often rearranges his sources—may have taken the praise from another part of John's text.

[137] See above, p. 6 and n. 25, and Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lxxxvii–lxxxviii (no. 17) and 547 n. 5.

[138] See Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lxxxviii (no. 19) and 557–58 nn. 2, 6, and 8.

[139] See above, pp. 5–6 and n. 20, and Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lxxxi–lxxxii (nos. 11 and 12, distinguishing George's poems from the "official history").

in 780 Leo, after discovering that Theophanes the Chamberlain and other palatine officials had brought icons into the palace for the empress Irene, had the men flogged so severely that Theophanes died and was venerated as a martyr. Both passages, and perhaps the subsequent account of the death of Leo IV in the *Chronography*, seem to derive from a saint's life of Theophanes the Chamberlain.[140] Although the name Theophanes was not uncommon at the time, the iconophile martyr could still have been a relative of the iconophile chronicler of the same name.[141]

These fourteen or so sources contributed to the text of the *Chronography* but not necessarily to its annual entry headings, with their regnal years of emperors, Persian kings, Arab caliphs, and patriarchs. Those headings often contradict the text, listing different incumbent rulers or bishops from those who appear in the entries that the headings introduce.[142] Apparently Theophanes took his headings from lists prepared by George Syncellus, especially because Theophanes' preface describes George as having established the dates "of the former kings of every nation" and of bishops, including those of "Constantinople," a see that did not exist in 285, when George's *Selection* breaks off.[143] A list of Persian kings that appears in George's *Selection* corresponds closely with Theophanes' entry headings. Yet George seems not to have completed these lists up to his own time. Apparently he listed popes only until 579, patriarchs of Jerusalem and Alexandria only until 630, and patriarchs of Antioch only until 608, though Theophanes later made blundering attempts to bring these lists up to date.[144] Whatever the sources of the lists were, they seem to have been mostly independent of the sources of Theophanes' text.

Having received these sources from George, Theophanes decided to divide his material into annual entries, as George generally had not. For Theophanes to compile his headings from George's lists of rulers with their regnal years was easy enough in principle. More problematic was assigning to annual entries the material from literary sources, which often lacked precise dates and used different chronological systems for whatever dates they included. Yet several of the sources available to Theophanes seem already to have included annual entries: the chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa as translated and continued by George until about 780, George's further continuation of it up to 813, the Alexandrian chronicle (perhaps

140 See Treadgold, "Indirectly Preserved Source," and Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. 619–20 n. 3. Since for this period Pseudo-Symeon and Cedrenus (who copied Pseudo-Symeon) include no other information that is not in Theophanes, they seem unlikely to have known Theophanes' main source, the continuation of Trajan, and must therefore have found these two passages in another source. (For the suggestion that this source was the *Secret History* of Nicetas the Paphlagonian, see p. 146 and n. 81, below.) The assumption of *PmbZ* I, nos. 8108 and 8109, that Leo IV had two different confidential servants named Theophanes within five years seems very improbable.

141 Such a relationship could explain why the *Chronography* fails to mention that the chamberlain was a trusted adviser of the fierce iconoclast Constantine V in 775, a fact that appears only in Pseudo-Symeon and Cedrenus.

142 See the examples listed in Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, p. lxii.

143 Theophanes, preface (p. 3.17–21).

144 See the comprehensive discussion in Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lxvii–lxxiii and lxxiv–lxxv (no. 1).

by Panodorus and his continuer) until about 518, Trajan's *Concise Chronicle* roughly from 629 to 720, and the continuation of Trajan (probably by Tarasius) roughly from 720 to 781. Once the dates in these sources had been matched with the years of the world according to the Alexandrian era—a task that George may already have completed or at least showed Theophanes how to complete—they could easily be combined into a single series of annual entries. We can readily understand why Theophanes would have wanted to retain such an abundance of chronological data and the convenient format of his sources' dated entries, instead of following George by omitting most dates and adopting no consistent method of organization.

The sources that were already arranged in annual entries would often have suggested to Theophanes when he should date events that appeared in other sources without dates. Besides, sources without annual entries mentioned a number of dates within their narratives. Yet they generally reported these dates either by regnal years, which were often incorrect in Theophanes' prepared headings, or by years of the indiction, which recurred in fifteen-year cycles, so that "the thirteenth indiction" could mean A.D. 400, 415, 430, 445, or any other date at further intervals of fifteen years. Moreover, for the sake of convenience Theophanes equated Annianus' years of the world, which began on March 25, with indictions, which began on September 1; but for just over half the year, each indiction corresponded to an earlier year of the world than it did during the rest of the year. Of course, in some sources Theophanes found events for which he could discover no specific date whatever. In such cases, he had to choose between omitting the events, putting them into an entry with another event that he could date, or assigning them to an entry through more or less arbitrary guesswork.

Under the circumstances, we should not be surprised that Theophanes' dates are often wrong. Sometimes, for various reasons, he redated an event by fifteen years, retaining the indictional date in his source but disregarding other evidence.[145] For the seventh and eighth centuries, when the *Chronography* is usually our best available source, modern scholars have discovered that Theophanes systematically dates events one year of the world too early from 609/10 to 684/85 (or to 714/15, according to some scholars) and from 725/26 to 772/73. Yet for these years Theophanes' text also includes many correct indictional dates, showing that he made his mistake only in converting an indictional date to the year of the world.[146] For the earlier period, when the *Chronography* is a less important source, Theophanes' chronology is even more confused. In the fourth century, as in the seventh and eighth, he often dates events one year of the world too early.[147] The reason is probably that

[145] See Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. xciii and n. 121, and 433 n. 2.

[146] See Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lxiv–lxvii, Treadgold, "Seven Byzantine Revolutions" (for 684/85 to 714/15), Rochow, *Byzanz*, pp. 52–54 and 328–37 (for 715/16 to 812/13), and Treadgold, "Missing Year" (for 742/43 and 743/44, which Theophanes mistakenly combined into a single annual entry—an explanation substantially accepted by Speck, "Letzte Jahr," though with some additional conjectures that I find implausible).

[147] E.g., Theophanes A.M. 5796 (dating Diocletian's abdication to 303/4 instead of 304/5), 5797 (dating Constantine I's accession to 304/5 instead of 305/6), 5816 (dating the Council of Nicaea to 323/24 instead of 324/25), 5821 (dating the inauguration of Constantinople to

Theophanes equated indictional dates in his Byzantine sources with years of the world in his Syrian source (presumably Theophilus) but sometimes forgot that the Syrian source began the year with March 25, not September 1 as Byzantines did.[148]

Most of the errors in Theophanes' *Chronography*, unlike some of those in George Syncellus' *Selection*, cannot easily be explained on the assumption that the text was left unrevised. Most of them must have resulted from carelessness or confusion. The chronological miscalculations in the *Chronography*, like the frequent miscopying of proper names, could scarcely have been corrected without redoing the original research, which Theophanes was obviously not planning to do. Similarly, a number of inconsistencies in the text of the *Chronography* are of a piece with the inconsistencies between the text and the headings, and could not have been corrected in a revision without doing further research.[149] In all probability, Theophanes thought that he had completed his unwelcome assignment as best he could by the time he wrote his preface, which was normally the finishing touch for a literary composition. George Syncellus wrote no preface because he never completed his work.

A number of short moralizing comments in the *Chronography* seem likely to have been added by Theophanes himself. However, five scholarly digressions in the earliest part of the text look very much as if he had copied them from notes left to him by George, since they closely resemble George's historical comments in his *Selection*. These passages discuss the date of Constantine's baptism (twice), the date of Eusebius of Nicomedia's appointment as bishop of Constantinople, the orthodoxy of Eusebius of Caesarea, and the orthodoxy of Cyril of Jerusalem.[150] Though the conclusions about Constantine's baptism and Eusebius of Nicomedia's accession are demonstrably wrong, all five digressions show a certain ingenuity in minimizing the influence of Arianism, especially over Constantine. These discussions are not at all typical of the rest of the *Chronography*, which consists overwhelmingly of plain narrative.

An unwilling historian and reluctant author who was an expert only at copying texts, Theophanes made no pretense of having an historical method or literary

328/29 instead of 329/30), 5828 (dating Constantine's death to 335/36 instead of 336/37), 5852 (dating Constantius II's death to 359/60 instead of 360/61), 5867 (dating Valentinian I's death to 374/75 instead of 375/76), and 5886 (dating Theodosius I's death to 393/94 instead of 394/95).

[148] In particular, Theophanes A.M. 6102 dates the beginning of Heraclius' reign to October 4 of the fourteenth indiction, doubtless from a Byzantine source (a 14th indiction began on September 1, 610), and to A.M. 6102, presumably from his Syrian source. Though the Syrian source was correct according to its own system, which made A.M. 6102 begin with March 25, 610, Theophanes' system of equating indictions and years of the world made A.M. 6102 begin with September 1, 609, so that he should have dated Heraclius' accession to A.M. 6103. Once Theophanes had made this mistake, he continued dating events one year of the world too early until 684/85. Though exactly how he made his other chronological errors is less clear, note that most of them also date events one year of the world too early.

[149] For examples, see Mango and Scott, *Chronicle*, pp. lxii–lxiii—who, however, argue from these errors that Theophanes' text was left unrevised.

[150] Theophanes A.M. 5814 (Constantine's baptism), 5827 (pp. 32.25–33.8, Eusebius of Nicomedia), 5828 (p. 33.19–22, Constantine's baptism again), 5829 (p. 34.21–27, Eusebius of Caesarea), and 5847 (p. 42.1–15, Cyril of Jerusalem).

style of his own. He altered his sources almost exclusively by abridging, paraphrasing, combining, or rearranging them to fit his annual entries. His few historical or literary ideas were simple and banal. His principles of organization were that events belonged in annual entries and that the entries should make sense but need not be self-contained. He saw history as a struggle between good orthodox Christians on the one hand and evil pagans and heretics on the other. He seems never to have tried to address problems of motivation, causation, or theology, though sometimes he copied more sophisticated writers who concerned themselves with such matters. If we attempt to analyze his practices in terms of literary or historical theories, we may learn a little about the workings of a commonplace Byzantine mind, but only by using abstractions that Theophanes would himself have dismissed with disdain, as he did the theological sophistries of John the Grammarian.[151]

Some may find it paradoxical that the *Chronography* of the slipshod, uncritical, and half-educated Theophanes is much easier to read and to consult than the *Selection* of the scrupulous, reflective, and learned George Syncellus. In contrast with the *Selection*, the *Chronography* can be read not just with interest but almost with pleasure. One reason is doubtless that Theophanes completed the *Chronography*, whereas George left his *Selection* unfinished. Probably more relevant is that historical narrative is as a rule more readable than historical analysis. Moreover, unlike George, who tried to rationalize and correct his sources, Theophanes did little more than report what his sources said. Theophanes' narrative is accordingly simpler than George's, since less editorial intervention separates the text from its sources. Even modern scholars, if they avoid assuming that Theophanes was more sophisticated than he really was, will find his *Chronography* easier to follow than George's *Selection*. Ordinary readers can enjoy Theophanes' intermittent efforts at lively narrative—when, for example, he summarizes Procopius' magnificent "Vandal War" at generous length.

Of course, had it not been for George and the materials he left behind, Theophanes would never have composed his work at all, and modern knowledge of Byzantine history would be much the poorer in consequence. For all its defects, Theophanes' *Chronography* has remained up to the present the most important source for Byzantine history from the early seventh to the early ninth century and a significant source for the period before that. Often copied in Byzantine times in its original form, translated into Latin by Anastasius Bibliothecarius, and paraphrased by various later historians, the *Chronography* became an indispensable work soon after the end of Iconoclasm in 843. No doubt the main reason is that so many of the sources of the *Chronography* are lost; but even if we had all its sources, we would probably not know a great deal more about the period from Heraclius to Leo V than we do now. Although little of the *Chronography* is actually the work of either Theophanes or George Syncellus, Theophanes had the sense not to discard much of his source material, and for that we should be grateful.

[151] Examples of approaches to Theophanes that I consider overly subtle can be found in Ljubarskij, "Concerning the Literary Technique," and Kazhdan, *History* I, pp. 224–34.

3
Theophanes' Successors

Today only one mediocre formal history and two minor chronicles survive complete from the hundred-odd years after 820. This meager tally may seem to show an interruption of the progress that Byzantine historiography had made during the late eighth and early ninth centuries. At first the official reinstatement of Iconoclasm in 815 does seem to have discouraged well-educated Byzantines from writing history. Apparently most of them thought that Iconoclasm was so bad and so important that they saw no point in recording recent events if they could not condemn it. Moreover, under the iconoclast emperors the histories of the previous period, all written by iconophiles, appear to have been difficult to find. The *Great Chronography* and the continuation of Trajan became so rare that they were eventually lost. Even the historical works of the patriarch Nicephorus, the *Selection of Chronography* of George Syncellus, and the *Chronography* of Theophanes seem to have had a very limited circulation during this time. After Theophanes, we must wait until Iconoclasm ended, in 843, to find our next surviving history, the ardently iconophile chronicle compiled from various sources by George the Monk.

Today our main record of the ninth century can be found in five tenth-century histories, which will be discussed in their own right in later chapters. The first of these histories to be written was probably the anonymous *Life of Basil*, which covers Basil I's life from his birth around 811 to his death in 886. This life has been transmitted in a collection conventionally entitled *Theophanes Continuatus* ("Theophanes Continued"), of which it is sometimes called the fifth book.[1] The second history to appear was probably Joseph Genesius' *On Imperial Reigns*, which covers the years from 813 to 886.[2] The third history, again anonymous, now forms Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus* and covers the years from 813 to 867, using much the same source materials as Genesius and the *Life of Basil*.[3] Fourth, the chronicle of Symeon the Logothete is independent of these three histories and in its original version covers the period from the Creation to 948, though a second edition (of which the part after 886 is sometimes called Book VI of *Theophanes*

[1] See below, pp. 165–80.
[2] See below, pp. 180–88.
[3] See below, pp. 188–95.

Continuatus) extends to 963.[4] Finally, the chronicle of the so-called Pseudo-Symeon, a partly summarized and partly expanded version of the two editions of Symeon's chronicle with some imaginary dates by regnal years, extends from the Creation to 963 (though only the part after 813 has been published to date).[5] These five histories evidently drew on earlier works that are now lost, of which at least some can be identified.

Theognostus the Grammarian

Genesius mentions no history that covered the years from 813 to 867 even in part, and the author of Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus* cites only one history for that period. At the end of a brief account of the Arab invasion of Byzantine Sicily between 826 and 829, *Theophanes Continuatus* adds, "These events are described very clearly and in much detail in a history that has come into our hands written at the time by Theognostus [who also wrote a work *On Orthography*], and anyone who wishes to consult it will be instructed about these events one by one."[6] Although Theognostus' history is now lost, a treatise *On Orthography* by one "Theognostus the Grammarian" survives. The treatise is dedicated in verse to a wise and eloquent emperor named Leo, whom the author says he knew personally.[7] Since Theognostus wrote as a contemporary about events in 829, this emperor was presumably Leo V the Armenian (813–20).[8] Otherwise, all we know for sure about Theognostus' history is that it included coverage of the Arab invasion of Sicily from 827 to 829. Evidently Theognostus concluded his history with 829, because though the Arab invasion continued unabated neither Genesius nor *Theophanes Continuatus* mentions Sicily again until the reign of Basil I (867–86).

Although some modern scholars have assumed that Theognostus limited his history to the first three years of the Arab invasion of Sicily, this seems extremely improbable. Not only was that subject too restricted for any proper history, but as a story of humiliating failure a monograph on the Arab invasion of Sicily would

[4] See below, pp. 203–17.

[5] See below, pp. 217–23.

[6] *Theophanes Continuatus* II.27 (82.17–20), where in line 18 for Θεογνώστῳ τῷ read (with the only primary MS, *Vaticanus graecus* 167) ἱστορία Θεογνώστῳ τῷ καὶ.

[7] Edited by Cramer, *Anecdota* II, pp. 1–165, with a new edition of the first part based on additional MSS by Alpers, *Theognostos*, pp. 68–115.

[8] Alpers, *Theognostos*, pp. 61–64 rightly rejects the idea that Theognostus' reference to the wisdom of the dedicatee identifies him as Leo VI (886–912), because an author who dedicates a grammatical treatise to an emperor must pretend that the emperor has enough education to appreciate it, and Leo V was certainly an intelligent man (and a friend of John the Grammarian). Yet Alpers can hardly be right to suggest identifying Theognostus the Grammarian with Theognostus the Protospatharius, who served as a Byzantine ambassador to Charlemagne in 812, because any protospatharius would surely have identified himself in the title of his work by his exalted rank rather than simply as a grammarian. Cf. *PmbZ* I, nos. 8011 (the protospatharius) and 8012 (the grammarian). I am not convinced by the arguments of Antonopoulou, "Date," that the dedicatee was Leo VI and Theognostus was extraordinarily long-lived.

have had little appeal for either Michael II or his son and successor, Theophilus, neither of whom managed to stop the Arab advance in the island. Theognostus did care about winning imperial favor, because he had recently sought it by dedicating his grammatical treatise to Leo V. Moreover, the historian is unlikely to have had firsthand knowledge of the Arab invasion of Sicily, because in 829 he had apparently been living in Constantinople at least since the reign of Leo V, with whom he claimed to be acquainted. The only plausible reason for Theognostus to have written about the invasion of Sicily is as part of a more general history, for which Michael II's death in 829 would have been a logical concluding date, since Byzantine historians typically stopped with the ends of imperial reigns.

Nonetheless, Theognostus does seem to have given much more attention to Sicilian affairs than might have been expected of a writer with no connection to the island. As it happens, the eleventh-century historian John Scylitzes says in his preface that after George Syncellus and Theophanes nobody else wrote a similarly satisfactory and comprehensive history, but "some people tried, like the Sicilian schoolteacher and our contemporary the Consul of the Philosophers and *hypertimos* [Michael] Psellus, and others besides them."[9] After Theophanes few Byzantine schoolteachers wrote histories, and none is known to have come from Sicily, which soon ceased to be Byzantine territory. We know of two Sicilians who wrote at Constantinople in the ninth century, the future patriarch Methodius, who arrived from Sicily around 800, and Peter the Sicilian, who arrived around 850; but neither of them was a schoolteacher or an historian.[10] Theognostus, however, was both a schoolteacher and an historian. If, like Methodius and Peter, he was an ambitious and educated Sicilian who came to the capital to advance his career, this would explain his otherwise unexpected interest in events on Sicily. He appears to be the only plausible candidate to be Scylitzes' "Sicilian schoolteacher."

If this identification is correct, according to Scylitzes Theognostus tried to write a general history, like George Syncellus, Theophanes, Michael Psellus, and

[9] Scylitzes, p. 3. Flusin, "Re-writing History," p. xv and n. 13, also identifies Scylitzes' Sicilian schoolteacher with Theognostus the Grammarian. Markopoulos, "Byzantine History Writing," p. 193, makes the unexplained and unreferenced assertion that Scylitzes' "Sikeliotes 'διδάσκαλος' … is surely a phantom, since while many manuscripts refer to him as a historian we have nothing by him"; but this is demonstrably an error, which has unfortunately been repeated elsewhere. A comparison with Markopoulos, "Théodore," p. 172 n. 9, shows that Markopoulos means the "John Siceliotes" identified as a sixteenth-century falsification by Kresten, "Phantomgestalten," pp. 213–17; but an eleventh-century Byzantine obviously could not have been deceived by a sixteenth-century fraud. Markopoulos, "From Narrative History," p. 709 n. 54, has now accepted the identification of "the Sicilian schoolteacher" as Theognostus.

[10] On Methodius, see *PmbZ* I, no. 4977, and for his birthdate (787/88), see Treadgold, "Prophecies," pp. 230–31. On Peter the Sicilian, see below, pp. 115–16 and n. 123. Though we shall see that Ignatius the Deacon was a teacher, he was better known as a deacon and bishop; we know enough of his life to be fairly sure that he was born near Constantinople, perhaps at Amastris; and, while he probably compiled a biographical dictionary, Scylitzes would probably not have considered it a history.

Scylitzes himself. The author of *Theophanes Continuatus* ostensibly inserted his reference to Theognostus' treatment of the Sicilian war not to identify his source (since he identifies none of his other sources) but to tell interested readers where they could find a more complete account of the Sicilian war than in his own work. Additional references to Theognostus would hardly have seemed necessary if the compiler included a more comprehensive summary of other parts of Theognostus' history that the author found more interesting or important than its account of the Sicilian war. In fact, we shall see later that in this passage the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* probably followed a standard Byzantine practice and copied his reference to Theognostus from another historian, Nicetas the Paphlagonian, who had summarized Theognostus' history in his own *Secret History*, which is now lost.[11]

If Theognostus did write a detailed general history, historians who drew directly or indirectly on his work might have been expected to include more of it than just its section on the remote province of Sicily. The first four books of both *Theophanes Continuatus* and Genesius present more or less the same material, devoting one book apiece to each of the four emperors Leo V, Michael II (820–29), Theophilus (829–42), and Michael III (842–67), though Book IV of Genesius also includes the reign of Basil I (867–82). Sometimes *Theophanes Continuatus* includes details omitted by Genesius, like the Arab invasion of Sicily; less often, Genesius includes a detail not in *Theophanes Continuatus*. Although the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* covers the same ground as Genesius at greater length, most of what he adds is commentary and rhetorical elaboration, not historical information. Several passages in Pseudo-Symeon also show clear parallels to accounts of the reigns of Leo V and Michael II in Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus*.[12] We shall see that the main common source of Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* was probably Nicetas' *Secret History*, which Pseudo-Symeon also used to supplement Symeon's chronicle.

Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* give accounts of Leo V and Michael II that are much more reliable than their accounts of Theophilus and Michael III, especially in their chronology. Though both historians are more or less right about

[11] For the *Secret History* of Nicetas the Paphlagonian, see below, pp. 134–51. Cf. the very similar reference of Symeon the Logothete to the account of the deeds of John Curcuas in the history of Manuel the Protospatharius, a reference borrowed almost verbatim by Scylitzes. (See below, pp. 197–99.) Signes Codoñer, *Período*, pp. 344–46, while noting that we do not know the extent and character of Theognostus' history, assumes without argument that all that *Theophanes Continuatus* used from it was a summary of its account of the revolt of the Sicilian officer Euphemius. Note that, even on the unnecessary and unlikely hypothesis of Signes Codoñer that Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* shared a "dossier" of sources, the following analysis would still apply to Theognostus as one of the items in that dossier.

[12] Cf. Pseudo-Symeon, p. 604.6–18, with Genesius I.4, and *Theophanes Continuatus* I.9 (Leo V's coronation); Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 609.22–612.2, with Genesius I.17–18, and *Theophanes Continuatus* I.21–23 (Leo's imprisonment of Michael); Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 618.19–620.6, with Genesius I.19–21, and *Theophanes Continuatus* I.24–25 and II.1 (Leo's murder); and Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 622.8–624.8, with Genesius II.10, and *Theophanes Continuatus* II.21–23 and 25–26 (Michael's war with the Arabs on Crete).

the order of events up to 829, for the period from 829 to 867 both are seriously confused, drawing on obviously legendary sources and recording events in a badly scrambled sequence with inadvertent repetitions. In the most glaring example, they recount the battle of Dazimon, of 838, four times apiece without realizing that they are describing the same battle.[13] By contrast, for the reigns of Leo V and Michael II, the two historians explain what they are doing when they give different narratives of the same event, or when they mention earlier events in order to explain later ones. All things being equal, one might have expected the two writers to have more accurate knowledge of the period that was closer to their own. Because the reverse is true, they seem to have drawn upon a comprehensive, generally reliable, and chronologically arranged narrative for the years from 813 to 829, but not for the years from 829 to 867.

In describing the reigns of Leo V and Michael II, Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* do make one major chronological error. Both date Leo's victory over the Bulgars in 816, before Leo's restoration of Iconoclasm, in 815, which they connect with a story that Genesius attributes to a lost poem by Theophanes Confessor.[14] They differ, however, as to whether Leo restored Iconoclasm before or after he allegedly made himself unpopular by mutilating men found guilty of minor crimes. Genesius mentions the beginning of Iconoclasm before the mutilations, introducing them by referring again to Leo's victory of 816; *Theophanes Continuatus* puts the mutilations first and the beginning of Iconoclasm second.[15] While the mutilations cannot be independently dated, Genesius implies that they led to the plot that resulted in Leo's murder, in 820.[16] *Theophanes Continuatus* records the successful plot against Leo in 820, just after describing Leo's restoration of Iconoclasm in 815. Evidently unaware that almost six years separated the two events, the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* depicts Iconoclasm as the immediate cause of Leo's downfall.[17]

Apparently the narrative source shared by Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* recounted Leo's victory over the Bulgars first, Leo's mutilations of criminals second, and Leo's downfall third, without recording Leo's restoration of Iconoclasm at all. The direct source of Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus*, probably Nicetas

[13] This was already noticed in 1934 by Grégoire, "Manuel," especially pp. 201–2.

[14] Genesius I.12 (Leo's victory) and I.13–14 (Iconoclasm, with the attribution to Theophanes in I.13); *Theophanes Continuatus* I.13 (victory) and I.15–20 (Iconoclasm). For the date of Leo's victory and its relation to his Iconoclasm, see Treadgold, "Bulgars' Treaty." The same story of how the monk Sabbatius ("Symbatius" in *Theophanes Continuatus*) persuaded Leo to restore Iconoclasm appears in Munitiz et al., *Letter*, pp. 113–15 (and 179–83). Genesius I.22 (corresponding to part of *Theophanes Continuatus* I.17), also describes Leo's Iconoclasm from Ignatius, *Life of Nicephorus* 163–64, 165, and 206–7. (See the apparatus to the edition of Genesius by Lesmüller-Werner and Thurn.) See also below, pp. 85 and 137–38 for the likelihood that the immediate source of these references was Nicetas the Paphlagonian's lost *Secret History*.

[15] Genesius I.15 (with the initial allusion to the victory); *Theophanes Continuatus* I.14.

[16] Genesius I.16 (Leo's cruelty foreshadows his murder) and I.17–21 (Leo's murder).

[17] *Theophanes Continuatus* I.21–25.

the Paphlagonian, seems not to have known where to insert the account of Leo's restoration of Iconoclasm that he found in Theophanes' poem, and either admitted his inability to date Leo's Iconoclasm or simply described it after Leo's death, where it obviously did not belong. Genesius and the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* therefore had to decide for themselves where they should record Leo's introduction of Iconoclasm. Both authors were inclined to connect Leo's persecution of iconophiles with his mutilation of common criminals, but they made different guesses about which came first. The allusion to Leo's victory at the beginning of Genesius' entry on the mutilations seems to show that in Theognostus' original text the mutilations directly followed the victory. In any case, both writers misplaced the restoration of Iconoclasm, which occurred earlier than either of them put it, before Leo's victory over the Bulgars in 816.

If this explanation is correct, Theognostus must not have given dates for most events and must have avoided mentioning Leo's restoration of Iconoclasm. This omission suggests that Theognostus wrote during the period of moderate and tolerant Iconoclasm that was adopted by Michael II in 821 and only abandoned by his son Theophilus in an edict of June 833.[18] Yet Theognostus does seem to have alluded to Iconoclasm once, in a story that followed his account of Leo's mutilations of criminals. In this story either an unnamed priest with a reputation for holiness (according to Genesius) or the future patriarch John the Grammarian (according to *Theophanes Continuatus*) persuaded Leo to accept an iconoclast interpretation of a passage in Isaiah.[19] Since at this point both historians have already made clear that Leo was an ardent and persecuting iconoclast, the story is pointless by the time they tell it. Remarkably, neither of them tries to refute the iconoclast interpretation of Isaiah, which on its face is rather plausible.[20] In Theognostus' text the story seems to have stood alone, unaccompanied by a description of Leo's iconoclast measures. Consequently Theognostus, though he felt unable to ignore Leo's Iconoclasm entirely, seems not to have been enthusiastic about it, or he would at least have recorded Leo's deposition of the patriarch Nicephorus and other iconophile bishops.

Whereas Genesius begins his narrative with Leo V's accession in 813 before referring back to the careers of Leo and Michael II as early as 803, *Theophanes Continuatus* begins with 803 and proceeds from there in chronological order. In theory, Genesius might have preserved the order of the original source, and the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* might have rearranged it chronologically,

[18] See Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 226–27 and 230–32 (Michael II) and 276–81 (Theophilus and his edict of 833, which has sometimes been dated imprecisely to 832/33).

[19] See the latter parts of Genesius I.15, and *Theophanes Continuatus* I.20. Presumably the original version left the priest unnamed, since Genesius had no reason to omit John's name if it was present, but the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* may well have thought John would be an appropriate identification to conjecture.

[20] As pointed out by Kaldellis, *Genesios*, p. 17 n. 76, the passage, correctly quoted by Genesius from the Septuagint (Isaiah 40.18–19), is: "To whom have you likened God, and to what likeness have you likened Him? Let not the carpenter make an image [εἰκόνα], or the goldsmith gild Him with gold or make Him a likeness by smelting."

which would have been easy enough to do. Yet Genesius seems more likely to have rearranged the original account to begin with 813 as part of his plan to continue Theophanes' *Chronography*, which ended with that year. If so, *Theophanes Continuatus* preserves the original chronological order. Significantly, the earliest event in both histories, a prophecy of 803 that accurately foretold the fates of Leo V, Michael II, and their comrade Thomas the Slav, refers not just to Leo's accession but to the reigns of both Leo and Michael, along with the revolt of Thomas against Michael.

Except in the very unlikely event that Theognostus the Grammarian wrote a history only of the Arab invasion of Sicily from 826 to 829, *Theophanes Continuatus* appears to identify Theognostus as the main (if probably secondhand) source that he shares with Genesius for the reigns of Leo V and Michael II. This source, like Theognostus' history, was evidently a detailed narrative that ended with 829. Its author was evidently a well-connected contemporary, like Theognostus, who in his *On Orthography* claimed an acquaintance with Leo V. Since a grammarian was by profession a schoolteacher, he would have been likely to meet a general like Leo in a professional capacity only if Theognostus had taught Leo's son Symbatius-Constantine, who would have been about ten years old when Leo was crowned in 813.[21] If Theognostus was indeed the "Sicilian schoolteacher" mentioned by Scylitzes, he probably left Sicily for Constantinople before 813.

Theognostus' history was, however, not the only source used by Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* (and Nicetas the Paphlagonian) for the years from 813 to 829. Each historian gives two varying accounts of the rebellion of Thomas the Slav (821–23) and declares that the same account is the more reliable one, though the version that both prefer is placed second by Genesius and first by the author of *Theophanes Continuatus*. The latter historian says that the supposedly more reliable version comes "from certain writers," presumably including his predecessor Genesius, but Genesius appears to name the original source: "They say that *On Thomas* gives a more accurate account, as follows."[22] Here Genesius apparently means a work that the *Suda* ascribes to Ignatius the Deacon, a contemporary of the revolt: "iambic verses concerning Thomas the rebel, which they call *On Thomas*."[23]

To judge from Genesius' summary, *On Thomas* was not reliable at all but reflected Michael II's official propaganda. Like Michael himself in a letter that he wrote to the Frankish emperor Louis the Pious, Ignatius evidently distorted the facts to discredit Thomas, who he asserted had rebelled against Leo V rather than Michael.[24] The version rejected by Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus*, though

21 See Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 203–4.

22 *Theophanes Continuatus* II.10 (ἐξ ἐγγράφων τινῶν); Genesius II.4 (τὰ κατὰ Θωμᾶν).

23 *Suda* I 104 (τὰ κατὰ Θωμᾶν).

24 See Lemerle, "Thomas," pp. 255–73 (especially p. 268, suggesting the identification of Genesius' "Version B" with Ignatius' poem), and Mango, *Correspondence*, pp. 12–13. Signes Codoñer, *Período*, pp. 218–22, 227–34, and 241–46, generally agrees with Lemerle, but adds some inconclusive reservations. Afinogenov, "Conspiracy," pp. 335–36, defends the version that Thomas rebelled against Leo because "it is found in the earliest, contemporary sources," including Methodius' *Life of Euthymius of Sardis* (not to be confused with the anonymous

also unfavorable to Thomas, is less distorted and more detailed, and seems to derive from Theognostus' history, even if Genesius and the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* knew that history only from Nicetas the Paphlagonian. Both versions of the revolt of Thomas probably come from Nicetas, whose opinion that *On Thomas* was more accurate was adopted by the later historians who give vague attributions to "certain writers" or an unidentified "they."

For the years between 813 and 829 Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* share with Pseudo-Symeon other material that seems not to come from Theognostus. This includes a report found in Ignatius the Deacon's *Life of Nicephorus* that when crowning Leo V the patriarch Nicephorus felt pains that presaged Leo's Iconoclasm.[25] The later historians also record a false prophecy by a monk named Sabbatius ("Symbatius" in *Theophanes Continuatus*) that Leo would enjoy a long reign if he destroyed icons, a story that Genesius attributes to the lost poem by Theophanes Confessor.[26] All three histories observe that Michael II's second wife, Euphrosyne, was a nun taken from a convent, a scandal that Theognostus, writing under Michael's son, would presumably have omitted.[27] Finally, the three later historians record the Arabs' supposed martyrdom of Bishop Cyril of Gortyn, who was actually a third-century martyr and unlikely to have been misdated by a contemporary like Theognostus.[28]

In theory, Genesius, the author of *Theophanes Continuatus*, and Pseudo-Symeon could independently have consulted Theognostus, Ignatius' *Life of Nicephorus*, Theophanes' lost poem, and another source or two. In practice, this is very improbable, because the three historians combine their material from Theognostus with their other material in similar ways, and because later parts of the three histories also have many passages in common. The three historians presumably took their shared material, including that from Theognostus, from a shared source, the lost *Secret History* of Nicetas the Paphlagonian. For the years from 813 to 829, Nicetas' main source appears to have been Theognostus, whom Nicetas summarized at length and combined with material from Ignatius' *Life of Nicephorus*, Theophanes' poem, and another source or other sources. Nicetas' history was probably the immediate source both of the citation of Theophanes' poem in Genesius and of the citation of Theognostus' history in *Theophanes Continuatus*.[29]

Life of Euthymius [*of Constantinople*]). However, propaganda need be no more accurate if it is contemporary, and as the official version disseminated in both Constantinople and the West the misinfomation that Thomas rebelled against Leo naturally deceived Methodius, who was in Rome in 820 and continuously confined to a monastery from his return to Constantinople in 821 until he composed the *Life of Euthymius* in 831. (See *PmbZ* I, no. 4977, and Treadgold, "Prophecies.")

[25] Cf. Pseudo-Symeon, p. 604.2–6, with Genesius I.14, *Theophanes Continuatus* I.18, and Ignatius, *Life of Nicephorus* 164.12–19.

[26] Cf. Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 604.18–606.10, with Genesius I.13, and *Theophanes Continuatus* I.15.

[27] Cf. Pseudo-Symeon, p. 620.9–11, with Genesius II.14, and *Theophanes Continuatus* II.24.

[28] Cf. Pseudo-Symeon, p. 624.5–8, with Genesius II.11, and *Theophanes Continuatus* II.23. On Cyril, see de Boor, "Falscher Bischof."

[29] See below, pp. 137–38.

The material from Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* that seems to come from Theognostus' history may be summarized as follows, and probably appeared in roughly this sequence.[30] In 803 Leo, Michael, and Thomas were serving as junior officers under Bardanes Turcus, commander of the Anatolic Theme. They accompanied Bardanes when he consulted a wise monk for advice before rebelling against the emperor Nicephorus I. The monk prophesied that Bardanes would fail and be blinded, that Leo and Michael would become emperors, that Thomas would be proclaimed emperor, and that Michael would kill both Leo and Thomas and rule in security. Although Bardanes foolishly ignored the prophecy and rebelled anyway, he surrendered and was blinded after Leo and Michael deserted to Nicephorus. The emperor rewarded Leo and Michael with houses in Constantinople and promoted them to higher ranks in the Anatolic Theme. When Michael I became emperor, he made Leo commander of the Anatolics. Leo then betrayed the emperor by fleeing during a battle with the Bulgars, taking control of the army, and seizing the throne.[31]

When the newly crowned Leo entered the palace, his fellow officer Michael stepped on the train of the imperial robe, a clear sign that he would be the next emperor. Imprudently disregarding the omen, Leo V made Michael a patrician and appointed him to a high military command in Constantinople, also giving their comrade Thomas a senior command in the Anatolic Theme. After trying but failing to negotiate a peace with the Bulgars, Leo marched out against them, pretended to flee before them, then ambushed them and won a great victory. After this defeat of the Bulgars and a later defeat of the Arabs, Leo became increasingly haughty, inflicted harsh punishments on criminals, and made himself unpopular. On the advice of a pious priest, the emperor avoided the use of icons. He also appointed honest officials and dismissed a city prefect who had failed to punish a senator for carrying off a commoner's wife. Nevertheless, Leo's cruelty led to his downfall.

The emperor envied his old comrade Michael the Amorian, who was openly denouncing the propriety of Leo's marriage to the empress Theodosia.[32] Finally the emperor discovered a plot by Michael and sentenced him to death. However, because it was Christmas Eve, Leo reluctantly agreed to Theodosia's request that he delay Michael's execution and investigate the matter further. Still uneasy, the emperor inspected Michael's prison cell, where he found his brave prisoner sleeping soundly. A servant of Michael's who had been concealed under the bed

[30] Theognostus seems to have supplied most of (though not quite all) the material in the following chapters, arranged in roughly the following order: Genesius I.6–10, I.1, I.3–5, I.11–12, I.15–21, II.2–3, II.12–13, and II.15, and *Theophanes Continuatus* I.1–14, I.21–25, II.1–2, II.11–23, and II.25–28.

[31] Genesius I.1–2, and *Theophanes Continuatus* I.6 also mention a different account—that Leo fought well in the battle of Versinicia in 813—but both adopt the version that Leo betrayed Michael I, which the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* (p. 15.16–21) says he found in a written source, perhaps implying that his source for the other account was oral. Note that the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* mentions in his preface (pp. 4–5) that he used both oral and written sources.

[32] On Leo's marriage to Theodosia, see below, pp. 87–88 and n. 34.

told Michael that Leo had been there. At this Michael became worried and managed to contact some undetected conspirators by asking for a priest to hear his confession. The plotters entered the palace disguised as priests coming to celebrate the Christmas liturgy, then assassinated Leo in church on Christmas morning. Michael was proclaimed emperor while still in chains.

At the news of Leo's murder, Thomas, the third officer who had served with Leo and Michael under Bardanes Turcus, had the Anatolic Theme proclaim him emperor in order to avenge Leo. Thomas gained the support of most of the empire's army and navy and allied himself with the Arab caliph, who allowed the patriarch of Antioch to crown Thomas emperor. Thomas' revolt lasted three years, including many vicissitudes of fate and a year-long siege of Constantinople. The emperor held off the besiegers by having his son Theophilus carry a relic of the True Cross around the walls, by sallying out from the gates, and by burning the rebel fleet with Greek Fire. Then an invasion by the Bulgar khan forced Thomas to raise the siege in order to fight the Bulgars, who defeated him. Finally Michael himself defeated the rebels and besieged them in different cities until he subdued them all, executing Thomas but sparing most of the others.

Thomas' rebellion gave Arab freebooters from Spain an opportunity to attack Crete and many of the islands of the Aegean Sea. The emperor, whose wife had now died, remarried at the insistence of his officials. Then he sent an expedition to retake Crete. The Byzantine force heavily defeated the Arabs but on the next night let itself be ambushed and slaughtered. Undaunted, Michael sent another expedition that retook the Aegean islands. Meanwhile, on Sicily, an officer named Euphemius was accused of marrying a nun and fled to the Arabs in North Africa, where he proclaimed himself emperor with their help. Euphemius landed on Sicily with an Arab army, but when he tried to enter Syracuse its citizens killed him. So matters stood when Michael died in bed and was succeeded by his son Theophilus, and Theognostus' narrative ended.

Theognostus seems to have recounted the saga of Leo V, Michael II, and Thomas from the time of the monk's alleged prophecy in 803 to Michael's death in 829. Without being strongly hostile to Leo, the historian favored Michael, emphasizing that the monk had prophesied Michael would survive his comrades and reign securely.[33] Theognostus apparently omitted the fact that Leo and Michael

[33] The matter is complicated because Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and Nicetas the Paphlagonian, as iconophiles, were more hostile to Leo and Michael than Theognostus was, so that any of them may have altered or supplemented his account accordingly. Afinogenov, "Conspiracy," pp. 333–38, tries to use their mixed reports about Leo and Michael to show that "Leo V was certainly assassinated because dissatisfaction of some powerful groups within the Byzantine élite had reached a critical point" (p. 338); but this argument will appeal only to those who share Afinogenov's post-Marxist intuition that "Even without calling the ghost of historical materialism from its grave, common sense compels us to look for some deeper causes for the change of power in Byzantium in 820 than the personal ambitions of Michael the Amorian" (p. 337). In fact, most changes of power at Byzantium resulted primarily from personal ambitions, and Afinogenov later theorizes that Michael had Leo assassinated simply to save his own life. (See p. 89 n. 40 below.)

had married Bardanes' daughters, Barca and Thecla, since betraying a father-in-law was more objectionable than merely deserting a rebel to join the reigning emperor. Theognostus, however, mentioned that Michael denounced Leo's marriage to his second wife, Theodosia, as "unholy," apparently because Leo had divorced Michael's sister-in-law Barca.[34] Though Michael himself married a second time (the Byzantine Church disapproved of all second marriages), the historian insisted that Michael had been widowed and that his officials had forced the marriage on him because they felt court protocol required an empress.[35] Theognostus also sought to minimize Michael's reverses on Crete and Sicily and to blame them on his subordinates and the rebels Euphemius and Thomas. Theognostus' account of these years was quite detailed, including well-informed accounts of the successful plot against Leo and of Thomas' revolt.

When did Theognostus' history begin? Genesius and the author of *Theophanes Continuatus*, whose histories nominally start with 813 to continue Theophanes' *Chronography*, seem to have consulted Theognostus' history for events as far back as Bardanes' rebellion, in 803. Nicetas the Paphlagonian's *Secret History*, which evidently began with the Creation, is lost.[36] Scylitzes, however, must have had independent knowledge of Theognostus' history if he knew that Theognostus was a Sicilian, a fact not mentioned by Genesius or *Theophanes Continuatus* but quite possibly mentioned in the title or preface to Theognostus' history. Scylitzes criticizes "the Sicilian schoolteacher," Psellus, and "others" like them because, "having applied themselves to their task in a cursory fashion, they were deficient in detail, omitting most of the more significant events; these historians, having made a mere inventory of the emperors and indicated who gained possession of the throne after whom, and nothing more, are useless for those who come after them."[37] Here Scylitzes' reference to Psellus is evidently not to Psellus' *Chronography* but to his *Concise History*, which gives a very abbreviated and often inaccurate account of the Roman kings, consuls, and emperors from Romulus to Basil II.[38] Scylitzes probably meant to include George the Monk and Symeon the Logothete among the "others" who wrote abbreviated and inaccurate histories.

[34] On Leo's marriages, see Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 196–99, and *History*, pp. 431–32 and n. 6. Kaldellis, *Genesios*, p. 7 n. 15, objects that Genesius I.3, and *Theophanes Continuatus* I.9 seem to regard "Barca" as an insult rather than a name, because the empress Procopia disdainfully called her that; but the chroniclers may have misunderstood "Barca" as an insult because the only wife of Leo's they knew was named Theodosia. Barca (Latin for "little boat") resembles the name of her father, Bardanes, and is no stranger or more insulting than the name of Bardanes' wife, Domnica (Latin for "Sunday"). Most important, Genesius II.1, shows that both Leo and Michael had been married to daughters of Bardanes (as acknowledged by Kaldellis, *Genesios*, p. 28 n. 114), while Genesius I.17, says that Michael criticized Leo's marriage to Theodosia as "unholy [ἀνοσίοις γάμοις]."

[35] *Theophanes Continuatus* II.24.

[36] See below, pp. 134–41.

[37] Scylitzes, p. 3. Note that Scylitzes distinguishes these historians from ten others whom he lists immediately afterward and criticizes not for superficiality but for bias. Cf. the discussion of Scylitzes' preface on pp. 332–35 below.

[38] See below, pp. 282–89.

We might therefore conjecture that Theognostus began his work, like Psellus' *Concise History*, as a rudimentary chronicle, and wrote at length only about his own times. An historian writing for an iconoclast emperor after 829 may well have wanted to replace Theophanes' account of the years before 813, which was strongly anti-iconoclast, and the easiest way to supersede it would have been to epitomize it, suppressing the anti-iconoclast passages. In that case, Theognostus may have begun summarizing Theophanes' chronicle where it begins, with Diocletian, or with the Creation, where George Syncellus' chronicle begins. Scylitzes seems to have made no direct use of the "useless" works of Psellus and Theognostus or of the similar chronicles of George the Monk and Symeon the Logothete, but rather composed his account of the years from 813 to 829 by summarizing Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus*. Perhaps Scylitzes merely glanced at the first part of Theognostus' history and decided it was too superficial to be useful, not noticing that its accounts of the reigns of Leo V and Michael II were much more detailed. Later Scylitzes may even have been unable to remember the name of this "Sicilian schoolteacher." Alternatively, Scylitzes may simply have repeated a vague reference by another writer to the superficiality of the history of "the Sicilian schoolteacher."

Theognostus appears to have been born around 780 in Sicily, then obtained a good enough education, probably in the capital around 800, that he could become a prominent teacher and meet Leo the Armenian around 813.[39] Perhaps Theognostus served as a tutor to Leo's sons. He dedicated his *On Orthography* to his imperial acquaintance, apparently hoping for a promotion of some sort; but his hopes seem to have been dashed by Leo's murder in 820. Theognostus was still just a grammarian when he wrote his history between 829, its terminal date, and 833, when Theophilus imposed a much stricter form of Iconoclasm than Theognostus professed in his narrative. The historian must have had some friends in high places, because only such people could have told him the details of the conspiracy of 820.[40] No doubt his history was meant to please Theophilus, to whom it may well have been dedicated.[41] It favored Theophilus' father,

[39] A birthdate as early as 770 would make Theognostus sixty-two in 832, which seems rather old for a man who still hoped to advance his career by writing an ambitious history; a birthdate as late as 790 would make him twenty-three in 813, which seems rather young for a man from a distant province to make a reputation that could attract the attention of the emperor.

[40] Afinogenov, "Conspiracy," pp. 329–33, may still be right to conjecture that Michael was actually innocent of plotting against Leo before his imprisonment but then blackmailed his friends by threatening to slander them as his co-conspirators unless they saved him. If true, this fact would have been known only to Michael and his friends (it appears in none of our sources); and as a writer sympathetic to Michael, Theognostus had good reason to suppress it even if he knew it. Afinogenov's suggestion that Michael punished the conspirators (except nominally, for propaganda purposes) gives too much weight to Methodius' *Life of Euthymius of Sardis*. (See pp. 84–85 n. 24 above.)

[41] Perhaps Theognostus prefaced his history with a verse dedication to Theophilus, like his verse dedication of *On Orthography* to Leo V and Genesius' verse dedication of his history to Constantine VII.

Michael II, avoided too much criticism of Theophilus' godfather, Leo V, and expressed mildly iconoclast sentiments that agreed with current church policy. Though in writing his history Theognostus seems to have misjudged how fervent an iconoclast Theophilus was, the emperor may still have rewarded him in some way unknown to us.

At least in his account of his own times, Theognostus appears to have made some effort at literary elegance, as we would expect of a grammarian. He evidently dated events by imperial reigns but not year by year, since none of the histories derived from his mentions specific dates and they all seem unsure exactly when Leo V restored Iconoclasm. Theognostus was particularly fond of prophecies and shaped his whole account of Leo, Michael, and Thomas to fit the prophecy that the monk had supposedly made to their commander Bardanes Turcus. Yet the historian seems not to have invented that prophecy himself, because he failed to record that Bardanes married his daughters to Leo and Michael, which was apparently the fact that lay behind the prophecy. Working with good information, Theognostus seems to have had a certain flair for lively narrative, apparent in his accounts of Leo's ambush of the Bulgars, Michael's conspiracy against Leo, and Thomas' revolt against Michael.

While the history of Theognostus the Grammarian evidently survived in at least the copy that Nicetas the Paphlagonian was able to use around 921, it can never have reached a very wide readership. Scylitzes was evidently aware of its existence but may not even have seen it. After 843 few Byzantines would have cared to read a history of the iconoclast period that failed to condemn Iconoclasm and barely mentioned the issue at all. If the earlier part of Theognostus' history merely summarized Theophanes and omitted his denunciations of Iconoclasm, later readers would have preferred to read Theophanes in the original. Theognostus' history seems not to have been continued by any later historian, since no iconophile would have wanted to continue a work that was not clearly orthodox. In the end, Nicetas, Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and Pseudo-Symeon did preserve much of the material in Theognostus' history, but only by incorporating it into their own histories with professed iconophile sentiments.

Sergius Confessor and the *Scriptor Incertus*

We owe almost all our knowledge of Sergius Confessor to his famous son Photius, twice patriarch of Constantinople (858–67 and 877–86).[42] Besides Photius' own writings, our main sources for Sergius' life are the chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon, who copied a strongly anti-Photian account probably from Nicetas the Paphlagonian, and the *Synaxarium* of Constantinople, a register of saints to which Sergius was

[42] On Sergius Confessor, see Mango, "Liquidation," and Treadgold, "Photius," pp. 1–7. *PmbZ* I, nos. 6665–67, are all probably the same Sergius. The identification of Sergius as Photius' father is dismissed by Kazhdan, *History* I, p. 211—who, however, ignores Mango's arguments in its favor (accepted as "überzeugend" by *PmbZ* I, no. 6665).

probably added by Photius himself during his patriarchate.[43] According to these sources, Sergius was born in the capital around 795 into a wealthy and eminent family. His uncle was the learned Patriarch Tarasius (784–806), who as we have seen had been elevated to the patriarchate after serving as protoasecretis, head of the imperial chancery. Sergius' father, Zacharias, pursued a career as a state official and evidently reached the rank of consul.[44] Pseudo-Symeon says that Zacharias had ancestors who were foreign, pagan, or both, and was related to an emperor named Leo. Apparently Zacharias was the part-Khazar nephew of the half-Khazar emperor Leo IV (775–80), since Khazars were both foreign and pagan, and Photius was later nicknamed "Khazarface."[45] If so, a less hostile source would have emphasized Zacharias' connection with Leo's iconophile son, Constantine VI (780–97).

Sergius presumably received an education suitable for a future civil servant, and soon attained the rank of spatharius, an uncommon honor for such a young man.[46] Around 810 Sergius married a woman named Irene, also a member of an aristocratic family, and they soon had a son, whom they named Tarasius after Sergius' uncle the patriarch. Their second son, born around 813, was Photius, named for an eighth-century iconophile martyr who may also have been a relative. Like his father, Zacharias, Sergius became acquainted with several well-known churchmen, including Bishop Michael of Synnada, Abbot Hilarion of Dalmatus, and the holy hermit St. Joannicius. Sergius and his family were even more devoted to monks and icons than was usual for government officials at the time. About 813 Leo V appointed Sergius' father, Zacharias, curator of the Mangana, a post created to administer the crown lands in Thrace confiscated from the recently deposed emperor Michael I.

When Leo restored Iconoclasm in 815, Zacharias and probably Sergius did what they could behind the scenes to help iconophile bishops and monks,

43 For the identification of the anti-Photian source as the *Secret History* of Nicetas, see below, pp. 134–41.

44 *PmbZ* I, nos. 8623, 8625, and 8626, are all probably the same Zacharias, because all three lived in the late eighth to early ninth century, held high office, and were family friends of iconophiles, including Michael of Synnada. (Cf. Treadgold, "Bulgars' Treaty," pp. 215–16.) Note that Theodore of Studius addressed three letters between 815 and 818 to a consul named Zacharias who had children and helped iconophile monks (*PmbZ* I, no. 8626). On the rank of consul, see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, p. 296.

45 Mango, "Liquidation," pp. 138–39, cites the references in Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 668–74, to Sergius' foreign (or pagan) blood (ἐθνικοῦ αἵματος) and to Michael III's calling Photius "Khazarface" (Χαζαροπρόσωπος), and in n. 42 identifies as "a scribal error" the statement of Pseudo-Symeon, p. 668.17, that an emperor named Leo was a "son" (υἱὸν) of Zacharias. The only acceptable emendation appears to be "uncle" (θεῖον), and the only possible emperor seems to be Leo IV. If Leo IV was Zacharias' uncle, Zacharias was presumably the son of an otherwise unattested daughter of Constantine V and his empress, Irene the Khazar. (For the possibility that Leo IV was not the only child of Constantine and Irene, see *PmbZ* I, no. 1437, p. 453.) Note that Irene the Khazar, a convert from paganism, became an iconophile like Zacharias. (The conversion of the Khazars to Judaism seems to have been gradual, partial, and later than this; see now Golden, "Conversion," especially p. 151.)

46 On the rank, see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, pp. 297–98.

including Michael of Synnada and Abbot Nicetas of Medicium. While discharging his duties in Thrace, Zacharias was briefly captured by the invading Bulgars, but when they made peace with the empire in 816 they freed him, as his friend Nicetas of Medicium had predicted they would. Although Sergius and his father continued to be iconophiles, Sergius' wife, Irene, had two brothers who joined the iconoclasts. One, John the Grammarian, an important abbot and the leading iconoclast theologian, was already persecuting iconophiles in 815. Around 821 John became tutor to Michael II's son Theophilus, who later made John patriarch of Constantinople (838–43). By 831 Irene's other brother, Arsaber the Patrician, seems to have become Theophilus' brother-in-law and to have persecuted iconophiles as postal logothete, the minister for foreign affairs and internal security.[47]

Despite being an iconophile, Sergius appears to have risen to the rank of protospatharius and the office of quaestor, the empire's minister of justice.[48] In 833, however, Theophilus issued an edict ordering the arrest of all iconophile clergy and monks, and the confiscation of the property of any layman who sheltered them.[49] Sergius appears to have tried to help some of these clergy and monks, as his father, Zacharias, had done before him, but he was somehow betrayed to the emperor. Theophilus evidently decided to make an example of such a high-ranking lawbreaker. He paraded Sergius through the forum (presumably of Constantine) with a rope around his neck like a common criminal, imprisoned him, confiscated his property, and finally exiled him with his wife and children, including Photius, probably still in 833. Although Photius later emphasized his parents' suffering, the conditions of their exile seem not to have been harsh. They may well have been sent to monasteries in the nearby Princes' Isles, since they were no more dangerous than Michael I or the sons of Leo V, who had recently been exiled there. Sergius must have been allowed to take his books with him, because when Photius himself was exiled he claimed that the confiscation of his own books was an unprecedented penalty. With ample leisure and little left to lose, Sergius apparently began writing an anti-iconoclast history, which he left unfinished when he died around 835.

[47] On John, see the references in *PmbZ* I, no. 3199 (except that John almost certainly became patriarch on April 21, 838; see Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, p. 297 and n. 406). On Arsaber, see Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, p. 431 n. 371. (*PmbZ* I, nos. 601 and 602, are in my opinion the same Arsaber the Patrician.) For the office of postal logothete, see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, pp. 311–12, and Miller, "Logothete," especially p. 468 n. 1 on his responsibilities for internal security.

[48] The evidence is a seal of "Sergius, Imperial Protospatharius and Quaestor" dated to the first half of the ninth century under Iconoclasm; see *PmbZ* I, no. 6667. For the rank (two grades above Sergius' earlier rank of spatharius) and the office, see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, pp. 297–98 and 321–22.

[49] For the date, see Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 280–81, and "Photius," p. 2. The confiscation of Sergius' property indicates that he was punished because of this edict (private veneration of icons was not illegal in itself), and Photius' emphasis on how young Sergius was at his death implies an early date for his exile.

Probably in 845, Photius included in his *Bibliotheca* a brief review of his father's history:[50]

> I read a denunciation of the iconoclasts by Sergius the Confessor. It begins with the actions of Michael [II], goes back to the lawless and abominable deeds of [Constantine V] Copronymus and, going forward continuously from that point, returns to the eighth year of the same Michael [827/28], recording his acts concerning Church and state, as well as relating in detail all that befell him in warfare and whatever he believed about religion. Sergius is, with respect to his style, distinguished as much as anyone by lucidity and artlessness both in the clarity of his vocabulary and in the composition and the rest of the arrangement of his work, so that he seems actually to have composed it by a sort of improvisation, because his writing, blooming with a natural grace, admits no expression derived from excessive effort. Thus his style is especially suitable for church history, which was indeed what he intended.

Here "Michael" must mean the emperor Michael II, since Michael I ruled for just three years, not eight, while Michael III took no part in ruling until after the eighth year of his reign (which was also probably later than Photius wrote). Sergius' history, after first referring to Michael II (and probably contrasting his moderation with the harshness of earlier iconoclast emperors), presented a continuous narrative from sometime in the reign of Constantine V (741–75) to 827/28. Sergius' history was presumably left unfinished, because 827/28 was a date of no special significance—unlike 829, when Michael II died. Photius' reference to Sergius' "sort of improvisation" may mean that the text was also left unrevised. The whole review appears rather defensive, because Photius, who as a rule preferred careful and elegant writing, praises Sergius for his artless spontaneity. The style that Photius calls "especially suitable for church history" must be the standard (*Koinē*) Greek of less formal church historians like Eusebius of Caesarea and Socrates of Constantinople. Yet in the *Bibliotheca* Photius criticizes Eusebius and Socrates for their undistinguished style, and Sergius included political and military history as well as church history.[51] Probably Photius avoided criticizing Sergius out of filial respect.

[50] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, cod. 67. In the first line, restore Σεργίου τοῦ ὁμολογητοῦ ⟨στηλιτευτικὸν τῶν εἰκονομάχων⟩ from Photius' table of contents in Martini, "Studien," p. 302.33–34. (See p. 108 n. 103 below; Martini's apparatus indicates that στηλιτευτικοῦ in his text is a mistake.) Signes Codoñer, *Período*, p. 212, fails to see the need for this restoration because he quotes Barišić, "Sources," p. 260 n. 1, who cited Bekker's old edition of the *Bibliotheca* (which included the entry from the table of contents in the text) rather than Henry's new edition (which simply ignores the table of contents). I am not persuaded by the arguments (or rather assertions) of Signes Codoñer, *Período*, pp. 212–16, that this phrase was the title of Sergius' history rather than Photius' description of it, that Sergius dealt only with the reign of Michael II, and that *Theophanes Continuatus* and Genesius made indirect use of Sergius' work.

[51] See Photius, *Bibliotheca*, codd. 13 (Eusebius) and 28 (Socrates).

Why did Sergius begin his history with the reign of Constantine V? Byzantine histories (unless they started with the Creation) usually continued earlier histories. In the *Bibliotheca* Photius reviews Sergius' work last in a succession of five histories, after Procopius' *Wars*, Theophanes of Byzantium's unfinished continuation of Procopius to 577, Theophylact's *Ecumenical History* from 582 to 603, and Nicephorus' *Concise History*, which continues Theophylact up to the marriage of the future Leo IV to Irene in 769.[52] Because Photius' *Bibliotheca* evidently describes the books available to his family during their exile, we can be reasonably sure that Sergius had access to Nicephorus' *Concise History* but not to Theophanes' *Chronography*, which is absent from the *Bibliotheca*.[53] In all likelihood, Sergius wrote his own history as a continuation of Nicephorus' *Concise History* after 769, and described "the lawless and abominable deeds" committed by Constantine V from that date onward.

Some of Sergius' history probably survives today in two anonymous fragments, of which the shorter is conventionally called the "Chronicle of 811" and the longer the *Scriptor Incertus de Leone Armenio* ("Unidentified Writer on Leo the Armenian").[54] The chronicle, which has evidently been somewhat adapted to turn it into an independent composition, deals only with Nicephorus I's disastrous campaign against the Bulgars in July 811. The *Scriptor Incertus* is a fragmentary chronological narrative of political, military, and ecclesiastical history that begins abruptly with December 811 and breaks off equally abruptly around February 816. It describes Michael I's defeat by the Bulgars in 813 as a result of his betrayal by Leo the Armenian, Leo's deposition of Michael, the Bulgars' raids on Thrace, and Leo's gradual reintroduction of Iconoclasm. Pseudo-Symeon, who apparently used this text in a slightly more complete form than ours, preserves a third fragment of it. The *Scriptor Incertus* was not, however, used by Nicetas the Paphlagonian for his *Secret History*, the source that Pseudo-Symeon shared with Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus*, because neither of them shows any knowledge of the *Scriptor*.

52 Photius, *Bibliotheca*, codd. 63–66. For the dates covered by Theophanes of Byzantium's lost history, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 290–93.

53 On Photius' reading, see Treadgold, "Photius," p. 7.

54 On the *Scriptor Incertus* and the "Chronicle of 811," now both reedited in Iadevaia, *Scriptor*, see Mango, "Two Lives," Kazhdan, *History* I, pp. 208–11, Dujčev, "Chronique," Browning, "Notes," Markopoulos, "Chronique," Sophoulis, *Byzantium*, pp. 23–34, Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* II, pp. 189–95, Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 333–34, and *PmbZ* I, *Prolegomena*, pp. 27–29. When I first suggested identifying the *Scriptor Incertus* as Sergius in Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 376–78, I was unaware that this identification had already been proposed by Markopoulos, "Χρονογραφία," pp. 152–59 (though I would attribute the passages that Markopoulos attributes to Sergius on pp. 157–59 rather to the *Secret History* of Nicetas the Paphlagonian, since unlike the other material conjectured to be from Sergius they appear in *Theophanes Continuatus*). Stephenson, "About the Emperor," pp. 87–101, in summarizing the debate, surmises (p. 95) that Sergius' history covered just the eight years from 820/21 to 827/28, which not only misrepresents Photius' description of Sergius' work but reduces that work to an implausible insignificance.

The full original text from which these fragments came seems to have concluded its account of each emperor with a brief description of his character and appearance. The "Chronicle of 811" gives such a character sketch of Nicephorus I after his death in 811; the *Scriptor Incertus* similarly describes Michael I after his deposition in 813; and the passage from Pseudo-Symeon includes a comparable description of Leo V, which presumably appeared in the original text after Leo's murder in 820.[55] These three fragments share a detailed but concise manner of narration and an unadorned and artless style, which is clear except when the grammar and syntax occasionally slip from carelessness into incoherence. All three passages seem to be the work of a well-informed contemporary who had personally met Nicephorus I, Michael I, and Leo V, and may even have accompanied Nicephorus' ill-fated expedition of 811. The first two texts include several speeches in direct discourse, employ dating by the emperors' regnal years, and monotonously link consecutive events with an unclassical word for "then," which is used thirty-two times in all.[56]

The "Chronicle of 811," like the passages in Pseudo-Symeon, must be rewritten to some extent in the version that we possess. The chronicle is an excerpt on a specific subject, not a more or less accidental fragment like the *Scriptor*, which begins with the words "And then." Moreover, the chronicle includes a reference to the Bulgars as "then not yet baptized," which must have been added after their conversion to Christianity in 865, and concludes with the usual ending for saints' lives, "and unto the ages of the ages, Amen."[57] The style of the chronicle, which as far as we can judge from such a short sample is more formal than that of the *Scriptor*, appears also to have been retouched by its redactor.[58] Yet that both the chronicle and the *Scriptor* derive from the same original remains highly probable, because both show clear parallels to the *Life of Joannicius* written by the monk Sabas around 855, before the conversion of the Bulgars.[59] Sabas is unlikely to have

[55] Pseudo-Symeon, p. 603.3–9 (where the description, however, is placed at the beginning of Leo's reign), was first identified as coming from a more complete version of the *Scriptor* by Bury, "Source."

[56] Kazhdan, *History* I, p. 210, notes that this word (λοιπόν) appears twice in the chronicle and "at least" twenty-nine times in the *Scriptor* (I count thirty times); but though the latter is only five times as long as the former, it covers a much longer period and a much larger number of discrete events, which gave the writer more occasions to use the word. As we shall see, the chronicle has also been revised somewhat, and the redactor may have removed this unclassical word in some cases in order to improve the style.

[57] But see p. 99 and n. 69 below.

[58] On the differences in style between the two, see Kazhdan, *History* I, pp. 209–10, and Markopoulos, "Chronique," pp. 257–60, though both seem to exaggerate those differences. Kazhdan relies on the more dramatic language that the chronicle uses for the more dramatic events that it describes; Markopoulos relies on the fact that Pseudo-Symeon failed to use the chronicle, which may simply mean that his mutilated text of the *Scriptor* began roughly where ours does, even though it ended a little later.

[59] See Mango, "Two Lives," p. 400 and n. 21, a point overlooked by Kazhdan, *History* I, pp. 208–10. Markopoulos, "Chronique," pp. 261–62, believes that Sabas could have used the chronicle (including its reference to the conversion of the Bulgars) to write his *Life of*

sought out two different sources, because he was not an historian but a hagiographer and wanted to obscure the historical facts in order to conceal Joannicius' desertion from the army and wavering over Iconoclasm.[60]

Like the chronicle and the *Scriptor*, Sabas dates a number of events by imperial regnal years. After stating (probably falsely) that Joannicius was born in the fourteenth year of Constantine V, Sabas mentions for no obvious reason that the saint turned sixteen "in the thirty-first year of the reign of the emperor [Constantine V] and the first year of the Christ-loving Irene who married his son Leo the Khazar," meaning 769/70. Sabas mentions seven more regnal years up to "the fifth year of the reign of Michael II and Theophilus his son" (825/26), when Joannicius helped to free some Christian prisoners from the Bulgars.[61] This liberation of prisoners was probably an historical event, because 826 was the year when the peace treaty of 816 with the Bulgars came up for its first decennial renewal, and Byzantine prisoners reportedly escaped from Bulgaria during negotiations for the second decennial renewal, in 836.[62] Yet soon after 826 Sabas seems to have begun working without a chronological source, because for the next seventeen years he fails to date any events, including some that he mentions prominently, like Theophilus' persecutions of iconophiles.[63]

Sabas' reference to the year 769/70 is striking not just because it had no special significance in Joannicius' life, but because Sabas oddly calls it the first year of Irene, who at the time had begun her powerless "reign" only as the emperor's daughter-in-law. The likely explanation is that at this point Sabas began to use the history of Sergius Confessor and simply repeated the first date it provided. As noted above, Sergius seems to have begun his history where Nicephorus' *Concise History* ended, with the marriage of Irene to Leo IV in 769/70. From that year on, Sabas was able to use the dates by regnal years in Sergius' history only until it broke off in 827/28—a date that Photius expresses as "the eighth year of the same Michael [II]." In fact, Sabas' *Life of Joannicius* probably includes several passages based on parts of Sergius' history that are not preserved by either the chronicle or the *Scriptor*. These concern the first period of Iconoclasm, Irene's restoration of the icons, Constantine VI's campaigns against the Bulgars, a Bulgar attack just before

Joannicius after 865; but this seems too late, especially because we would then need to allow still more time after 865 for the chronicle to be composed and to reach Sabas. Mango, "Two Lives," pp. 394–95, points out that Sabas' *Life* was commissioned by Joseph, Joannicius' immediate successor as abbot of the Monastery of Antidium in 846, because Joseph was dissatisfied with the *Life of Joannicius* written in 846/47 by Peter; we should therefore expect Sabas to have written not very long after Peter. Note that Sabas repeatedly mentions the Bulgars but never speaks of them as if they had been converted.

60 See Mango, "Two Lives." Kazhdan, *History* I, pp. 327–36, also discusses the two biographies, raising possible objections to Mango's interpretation without seriously contesting it.

61 My quotations are from Sabas, *Life*, §§ 2 and 29. For the full list of the chronological references, see Mango, "Two Lives," pp. 396–98.

62 See Treadgold, "Bulgars' Treaty."

63 See Sabas, *Life*, § 36. Beginning with 843 Sabas again becomes better informed, evidently relying on a different source, perhaps a contemporary informant.

Nicephorus' campaign of 811, the murder of Leo V, a conference of iconophiles under Michael II, and the liberation of the Bulgars' captives in 826.[64]

At a time when relatively few histories were written, we should be very reluctant to postulate more than one iconophile history that dated events by regnal years, dealt with both ecclesiastical and political events, used an artless and extemporaneous style, began with the reign of Constantine V, and ended with the reign of Michael II. Yet we would need to believe in at least two such histories if Sergius Confessor were a different historian from the *Scriptor Incertus*. While the style of the *Scriptor Incertus* may seem too awkward and unclassical to be attributed to the father of the learned Photius, the style of Theophanes Confessor, another aristocrat with no more than a secondary education, is scarcely better. Although the patriarch Nicephorus' style is more erudite, his *Concise History* still includes many grammatical errors and some incoherent sentences. Besides, Sergius' history must have been left unfinished and was probably a rough draft that the author planned to rewrite later so as to improve its style. This seems especially likely because as a continuer of Nicephorus' *Concise History* Sergius could have been expected to emulate the style of the work he was continuing, whereas the *Scriptor Incertus* makes no attempt at Attic Greek. Since Attic did not come naturally to him, Sergius seems to have decided to write his narrative first in simple Greek and then to recast it in Attic. As it happened, he died before he could finish even his rough draft.[65]

We may well have one additional fragment of Sergius' history in the last part of the "Chronicle of Monemvasia." This passage, dated to the fourth year of Nicephorus I (804/5), tells how a general named Sclerus, based at Corinth, conquered the western Peloponnesus from the Slavs, allowing the emperor Nicephorus to convert the Slavs and to rebuild and resettle Patras, Sparta, and other towns in the reconquered territory.[66] This circumstantial but brief account

[64] These passages, no doubt adapted and abridged, are in Sabas, *Life*, §§ 3 (fifty-seven years of Iconoclasm [730–87] under the Isaurian dynasty), 4 (the restoration of icons), 6 (campaigns against the Bulgars), 15 (a Bulgar invasion mentioned in the first sentence before Nicephorus' last campaign, which is described much more fully in the "Chronicle of 811"), 24 (Leo's murder), 28 (the iconophile conference), and 29 (the Bulgars' captives). Note that Sabas misdates to 782 the restoration of the icons that occurred in 787 (as noted by Mango, "Two Lives," p. 398 n. 11), apparently because Sabas counted the beginning of Sergius' fifty-seven years of Iconoclasm not from Leo III's edict of 730, as Sergius evidently did, but from Leo's earlier iconoclast measures in 725. Sabas also mistakenly combined Constantine VI's two campaigns against the Bulgars in 792 and 796. (See Mango, "Two Lives," p. 398.)

[65] Ševčenko, "Search," p. 280 n. 1, notes that my identification of the *Scriptor* with Sergius "assumes an embarrassingly low level of literary sophistication for the putative father of Patriarch Photios; and the stylistic judgment in codex 67 of Photios' *Bibliotheca*—our only source for Sergios—does not bear out such an assumption." Yet in codex 67 Photius speaks of Sergius' "artlessness" and "improvisation" and avoidance of "excessive effort," which are all expressions that suggest a low level of literary sophistication that seems to have caused Photius some embarrassment.

[66] "Chronicle of Monemvasia" 134–205; cf. Lemerle, "Chronique," pp. 10–11 and 16–22, and pp. 124–26 below.

has evidently been adapted by its anonymous compiler, who was interested only in the Peloponnesus, from an earlier and longer chronicle of wider scope. Since that earlier chronicle called Patriarch Tarasius a saint, it was composed after his death in 806 but obviously by an iconophile and apparently still within living memory of the events of 804. This source of the "Chronicle of Monemvasia" was independent of Theophanes, the only contemporary iconophile historian apart from Sergius known to have covered Nicephorus I's reign. The date by Nicephorus' regnal year further supports an identification of the historian with Sergius.

In any event, if Sergius wrote the history from which the chronicle and the *Scriptor* come, his life and his work can help to illuminate each other. Like almost all the officials of his time, Sergius probably received only a secondary education, and he seems to have been content with it, like Theophanes, and not to have pursued his studies on his own, like his son Photius. Sergius evidently grew up around the court of Leo IV the Khazar, who was apparently his great-uncle, and Sergius evidently admired Leo's "Christ-loving" empress, Irene the Athenian. Sergius could presumably have relied on his own memory to adorn his history with its descriptions of Nicephorus I, Michael I, and Leo V. Sergius' father, Zacharias, who was probably born around 770 and lived past 816, could also have told his son about Leo IV, Irene, and Constantine VI, who may have been described in lost parts of the history. Sergius must also have known still older men who could describe the first emperor mentioned in his history, Constantine V, who died in 775.

By the time of Nicephorus I's Bulgarian expedition in 811, Sergius would have been about sixteen years old and recently married. The "Chronicle of 811," in its initial description of those who went on the campaign, gives an unexpected prominence to the Tagma of the Hicanati, a regiment of "dignitaries' sons who were fifteen years old and more" placed under the command of Nicephorus' grandson Nicetas Rhangabe (the future patriarch Ignatius). The chronicle singles out in its final description of the dead those young "sons of officials," some of whom were "newly married to women distinguished by their rank and beauty." Such adolescent aristocrats seem to have held only nominal commissions as the regiment's twenty-four senior officers, leaving their actual duties to be discharged by others. Though their nominal head was the twelve-year-old Nicetas, he was obviously unable to serve as their effective commander, a position that was assigned to the experienced general Peter the Patrician.[67]

The chronicle shows a strange mixture of familiarity with the imperial retinue and ignorance of sensitive military information. The writer knew that just before the disaster Nicephorus had interrupted his advance—but not that the reason for his inaction was that his army was trapped by palisades built by the Bulgars, a fact that the emperor must have hidden from most of his army to avoid causing a panic. This combination of privilege and ignorance indicates that Sergius either served among the young officers of the Hicanati himself, as seems likely in view of

[67] See Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 26–29 (on the command structures of all the tagmata) and 162 and n. 212 (on the organization of the Hicanati in 809/10 and the age of Nicetas/Ignatius).

his age and rank, or had one or more of the Hicanati as his informants.[68] The final exhortation in the chronicle, "Let us remember, Brothers, our dead brothers and fathers," by not mentioning sons suggests a writer deeply involved in the events but too young to have lost friends or relatives of a generation younger than his own.[69] The author evidently blamed the deaths of his friends and relatives in the catastrophe on the emperor Nicephorus.

The *Scriptor* also reveals some personal touches that fit what we know of Sergius Confessor. The historian blames Leo V for confiscating the personal and inherited property of Michael I, which we know Sergius' father, Zacharias, administered as curator of the Mangana.[70] The *Scriptor* is fiercely hostile to Iconoclasm, and repeatedly calls Leo (*Leōn* in Greek) "Chameleon," because he introduced Iconoclasm by gradually shifting his positions. The *Scriptor* is especially hard on the iconoclast theologian John the Grammarian, Sergius' brother-in-law. According to the *Scriptor*, John "was possessed by a demon from his childhood. Behaving lawlessly, abiding in stupidity, [John] was the one they called Hylilas (as some say), which is interpreted in Hebrew (it is said) as the precursor and accomplice of the Devil."[71] Later the *Scriptor* adds that Leo V's senior officials refused to accept John's candidacy for patriarch of Constantinople because he was "young and undistinguished."[72] Though John was well born, intelligent, shrewd, and accomplished, Sergius probably felt betrayed when his brother-in-law turned iconoclast, since at the time of Sergius' marriage, around 810, John had been an iconophile like Sergius. The author is so bitter that we might even guess that John was the one who betrayed Sergius to Theophilus in 833.

Did Sergius know of the history of Theognostus the Grammarian? Though the absence of Theognostus' history from Photius' *Bibliotheca* indicates that Sergius had no access to the history during his exile, he may still have seen it between its appearance around 831 and his arrest around 833. The material we can attribute to Sergius shows no obvious parallels to the material we can attribute to Theognostus; but we have much less than the full text of either work, and Sergius cannot have much admired Theognostus' history, which was tepidly iconoclast, or have needed to rely much on it, because he wrote on a period that he and his relatives and friends knew from personal experience. Since the literary community in Constantinople was small, and Theognostus, like Sergius, had connections at court, Sergius may well have learned about Theognostus' work. He may even have written his history to answer Theognostus, who appears to have treated Iconoclasm as a minor issue.

[68] On the different accounts of the disaster in Theophanes and the chronicle, see Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 172–73 and 411–12.

[69] I therefore disagree with Iadevaia, *Scriptor*, p. 33, who brackets the whole last paragraph as an addition to the *Scriptor* by the redactor of the chronicle. I would bracket only the last phrase, beginning with ὅτι εὐλογημένος.

[70] *Scriptor Incertus*, p. 50 Iadevaia (p. 341 Bekker).

[71] *Scriptor Incertus*, p. 59 Iadevaia (pp. 349–50 Bekker).

[72] *Scriptor Incertus*, p. 69 Iadevaia (p. 359 Bekker).

Of the fifty-nine years apparently covered by Sergius' history, our main surviving fragments cover about five, from 811 to 816. Since those five years were more eventful than most of the rest and we have a few other fragments, we may have a bit more than a tenth of the original text. Photius must have had a complete copy, perhaps his father's autograph, and probably lent it to Sabas to help him write his biography of St. Joannicius, who had been an old friend of Photius' family. As a wealthy and influential man, Photius could easily have had his father's history copied and distributed. Yet evidently he chose not to do so, because Sabas and Photius himself are the only ones we know who read the full text. Even if the author of the "Chronicle of Monemvasia" also used it around 900, he may well have been Arethas of Patras, who could have obtained the text through his connection with Photius.[73] By the tenth century Pseudo-Symeon found barely more than we have in our text of the *Scriptor Incertus*. Seemingly Photius, despite a halfhearted attempt to suggest the contrary in his *Bibliotheca*, felt that this careless and unclassical history did his father little credit, and preferred for Sergius to be remembered as a courageous confessor rather than a mediocre writer. Although Sergius' history was no masterpiece, what we know of it shows that Sergius had some talent for simple narrative, a good knowledge of the inner workings of the Byzantine court, and a desire to continue the tradition of Nicephorus' *Concise History*.

Ignatius the Deacon and Photius

The accession of the iconophile empress Theodora and her infant son, Michael III, in 842, gave less impetus to historiography than the accession of Irene and Constantine VI had done in 780. One reason may be that the second restoration of icons, unlike the first, damaged or destroyed the careers of many prominent Byzantines. Almost all incumbent bishops, no matter how repentant, lost their sees, and many were replaced by obscure monks, some from Syria or Sicily.[74] Few Byzantine officials, officers, or clergy could claim much credit for having resisted Iconoclasm. The whole second iconoclastic period was an embarrassment to the new iconophile regime, not least because Theodora, unlike Irene, revered the memory of her iconoclast husband. Under the circumstances, writing a history of the previous thirty years offered contemporaries more hazards than rewards. Yet soon after 843 two scholars did compile works that, without being histories in the conventional sense, included important historical material that went back to ancient Greece.

The compiler of the first such work, a dictionary of authors, was probably Ignatius the Deacon, whom we have already met as the author of the *Life of Nicephorus* and the poem *On Thomas*, about the rebel Thomas the Slav.[75] Ignatius'

[73] See below, pp. 124–26.

[74] On the mass dismissal of iconoclast clergy in 843, see now Afinogenov, "Great Purge."

[75] On Ignatius, see Mango, *Correspondence*, pp. 1–24, Efthymiadis, *Life*, pp. 38–50, Kazhdan, *History* I, pp. 343–66, Ševčenko, "Hagiography," pp. 120–25, and *PmbZ* I, no. 2665.

life is relatively well documented, especially by his own letters. Yet much about it remains uncertain, including whether his letters are arranged in strictly chronological order, though this seems more likely than not.[76] Ignatius was apparently born around 775. His birthplace was perhaps the little Black Sea port of Amastris, since he probably wrote a biography of its local saint, its bishop George, in which he seems to call Amastris his home town.[77] Ignatius' family appears to have had some wealth and influence, because he received an excellent education for his time, presumably in Constantinople, and at an early age found favor with Patriarch Tarasius, probably through family connections. Even when Ignatius deemed himself to be in dire poverty, he had several servants.[78]

Tarasius must have found Ignatius a promising young scholar. Ignatius reports that the patriarch taught him the metrics of ancient poetry, a subject not normally covered in secondary school, and had him record patriarchal sermons by stenography.[79] Probably it was Tarasius who ordained Ignatius deacon around the canonical age of twenty-five, about 800. Apparently after 806, under the patriarch Nicephorus, Ignatius became sceuophylax of St. Sophia, the second-ranking position in the patriarch's suite, with responsibility for a staff of secretaries and the church's many liturgical vessels, vestments, and books. Before long Ignatius became a close friend of another member of the patriarchal suite, the chartophylax Nicephorus, who ranked slightly lower than the sceuophylax and was responsible with his own staff for drafting and keeping patriarchal documents. The two men, both deacons of about the same age, shared a love of classical learning that their posts gave them the leisure and resources to pursue.[80]

When Leo V reimposed Iconoclasm in 815, Ignatius, who like most Byzantine churchmen was an iconophile at heart, made a fateful decision. His superior, Patriarch Nicephorus, resisted Iconoclasm and was deposed and exiled. Ignatius'

[76] See Mango, *Correspondence*, pp. 19–21. The letters must be at least roughly in chronological order, with nos. 1–30 mostly belonging to the 820's and nos. 31–63 mostly belonging to the 840's. The reason for the apparent gap in the collection during the 830's may be that Ignatius was then living in Constantinople, where he could see in person most of the people to whom he would otherwise have written letters.

[77] Such is the suggestion of Mango, *Correspondence*, pp. 17–18 (especially nn. 85 and 86) and 180; the author's attachment to his home town would help to explain his undertaking the awkward task of writing the life of an iconophile saint under Iconoclasm.

[78] Ignatius, *Letters*, nos. 38.19–33, 42.1–15, and 63.15–17.

[79] Ignatius, *Life of Tarasius* 69.

[80] Ignatius, *Letters*, no. 11.1–6 (cf. Mango, *Correspondence*, p. 173), implies that before Ignatius became bishop of Nicaea he held a high rank at St. Sophia, and the only such rank he is known to have held was sceuophylax. Ignatius, *Letters*, no. 19.33–39, implies that he had been one of the patriarch's subordinates along with the chartophylax (Nicephorus), though not necessarily that Ignatius was still sceuophylax at the time (as suggested by Mango, *Correspondence*, p. 177); note that this letter is addressed to Nicephorus, bishop of Caria, who held that see while Ignatius was bishop of Nicaea (Mango, *Correspondence*, p. 170). On the sceuophylax and chartophylax of St. Sophia, see Darrouzès, *Recherches*, pp. 12–16, 19–32, 314–18, and 334–53. For the friendship between Ignatius and Nicephorus, see Mango, *Correspondence*, pp. 21–22.

friend Nicephorus the Chartophylax kept his iconophile sentiments to himself and retained his office; but such a course was almost impossible for the sceuophylax, who had custody of many objects decorated with religious images that now had to be destroyed or defaced. Ignatius chose to accept Iconoclasm, and seems even to have composed two iconoclast poems that Leo V ordered inscribed in the palace vestibule.[81] Ignatius' reward was the important archbishopric of Nicaea, whose incumbent had been deposed as an iconophile. Yet to judge from his letters, Ignatius was unhappy in his see. His duties were burdensome; his conscience troubled him about Iconoclasm; and he often left for Constantinople, which he preferred to the large but still provincial town of Nicaea.[82] Around 820 he seems to have written his first hagiographical work, *The Life of St. George of Amastris*, in which he managed to avoid mentioning icons at all.[83]

The future of Iconoclasm came into doubt with the murder of Leo V, the accession of Michael II, and the revolt of Thomas the Slav, in 821–23, because both Michael and Thomas sought support from iconophiles. During the rebellion Ignatius' see of Nicaea was subject to Michael II as the headquarters of the Opsician Theme, whose commander was Michael's cousin Catacylas.[84] Around 823, when Thomas' revolt was suppressed, Ignatius composed his poem *On Thomas*, evidently to curry favor with Michael. Ignatius and his friend Nicephorus the Chartophylax now planned to write a treatise or treatises against Iconoclasm, perhaps to refute an iconoclast tract by John the Grammarian that John had earlier shown to Ignatius, believing him to be an iconoclast.[85] Evidently they gave up the idea when Michael II made clear that Iconoclasm would remain official doctrine. Around 825 Ignatius seems to have resigned his bishopric, renounced Iconoclasm, and become a monk

[81] See Mango, *Correspondence*, pp. 14–15.

[82] See Ignatius, *Letters*, nos. 1–11, 16, 17 (his burdensome episcopal duties), 18, 24 (his scruples about Iconoclasm; cf. Mango, *Correspondence*, pp. 177 and 182), and 5, 9, and 10 (his frequent visits to Constantinople; cf. Mango, *Correspondence*, pp. 167 and 170). Though no. 19 (and perhaps also no. 20) was evidently written at Constantinople ("this most happy capital city"), Ignatius may have been only visiting the capital at the time, while he was still archbishop of Nicaea; he seems to have been at Nicaea when he wrote nos. 21–24 to Democharis the General Logothete and nos. 25–30 to Nicephorus the Chartophylax, both of whom normally lived at Constantinople, especially because nos. 25–27 ask Nicephorus to join Ignatius at his residence in a rural place infested with mosquitoes (still abundant today in Nicaea/İznik, on Lake Ascania).

[83] See Mango, *Correspondence*, pp. 17–18, referring to Ševčenko, "Hagiography," pp. 120–25. I would now date this life, apparently written after 819, at the very end of the reign of Leo V, around 820, since so much circumspection about icons would probably have been unnecessary under the more tolerant Michael II.

[84] On conditions during and just after the revolt, see Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 225–47, though I have since changed my views on Ignatius somewhat in the light of Mango's work on Ignatius' letters.

[85] Ignatius, *Letters*, nos. 27 and 30, in the latter of which "Goliath" seems likely to mean John the Grammarian, the leading iconoclast theologian of the time; cf. Mango, *Correspondence*, pp. 183 and 184–85—who, however, suggests that "Goliath" may be Michael II, although acknowledging that "there is no evidence that he engaged in literary composition."

on the Bithynian Mount Olympus.[86] Probably soon after the deposed iconophile patriarch Nicephorus died in 828, Ignatius praised his former superior in his *Life of Nicephorus*, of which we seem to have a later version.[87]

Rural monastic life with few books cannot have been congenial to the urbane and scholarly Ignatius. Around 830 a friend of his, the imperial secretary Leo, helped him obtain a teaching position in Constantinople.[88] Ignatius seems to have been appointed Ecumenical Teacher, since he was presumably the Ignatius with that title who wrote a verse inscription for a part of the imperial palace completed in 838 or 839.[89] The Ecumenical Teacher's main responsibility was probably to teach secular subjects to students at the Patriarchal School who were destined for careers in the Church.[90] Ignatius' verses for the palace cannot have been explicitly iconoclast, because they remained in place a century later. Besides, when Ignatius was appointed, both Church and state were still fairly tolerant of iconophiles.

Ignatius' writings when he was Ecumenical Teacher appear to include a lost grammatical treatise, of which only his introductory poem survives, and the original edition of his dictionary of authors. That the latter was first compiled under Iconoclasm is evident from the fact that its article on John of Damascus fails to identify John as a leading iconophile theologian, depicting him instead only as an accomplished hymnographer and biblical commentator.[91] Uncomfortably for Ignatius, soon after appointing him Ecumenical Teacher Theophilus enacted militantly iconoclastic measures in 833, and even harsher ones in 838, when the arch-iconoclast Patriarch John the Grammarian became Ignatius' immediate superior. Again Ignatius found himself ranged with the iconoclasts by the force of circumstances, which he was powerless to prevent but might have resisted had he been more scrupulous or courageous.

When Theodora succeeded Theophilus in 842, Ignatius again found himself in trouble. To be sure, he had resigned the bishopric he had accepted under

[86] See Ignatius, *Letters*, nos. 31 and 58, and Mango, *Correspondence*, pp. 19–20.

[87] See Mango, *Correspondence*, pp. 8–12.

[88] I, however, doubt that Mango, *Correspondence*, p. 20, is right to conclude that the position obtained by Leo the Asecretis "evidently did not bring the emoluments that Ignatios was led to expect." Rather than Mango's translation of Ignatius, *Letters*, no. 58.27–28, as "Not only that, but you also allowed me to be made a mockery through indigence," I would prefer, "Not only that, but [now] you have also allowed me to be made a mockery through indigence," taking the aorist participle ἐάσαντες to mean that Ignatius' earlier acceptance of a position under the iconoclasts had led to his *present* disgrace and poverty c. 843, which he wanted Leo to help relieve.

[89] See Mango, *Correspondence*, p. 15 and nn. 65 and 67, though Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, pp. 97–98, rejects the identification of this Ignatius with Ignatius the Deacon.

[90] On the title of οἰκουμενικὸς διδάσκαλος, see Browning, "Patriarchal School," especially pp. 167–70. Though Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, pp. 93–98, thinks that this position was purely secular, he relies chiefly on evidence earlier than the time when the patriarch of Constantinople changed the meaning of the term "ecumenical" by adding it to his own title; Browning cites later evidence.

[91] See Mango, *Correspondence*, pp. 3–5 (on the dictionary) and 14 (on the grammatical treatise). The article on John of Damascus appears in *Suda* I 467.

Iconoclasm, become an iconophile monk, and written a *Life* of the iconophile patriarch Nicephorus; but leaving his monastery to serve the persecuting iconoclast Theophilus could still be considered a second betrayal of the iconophile cause. At the restoration of icons in 843 the patriarch Methodius (843–47) evidently exiled Ignatius to the Monastery of Picridius, near Constantinople. Ignatius declared his abject repentance. He composed a *Life* of his old patron Tarasius, pointedly praising Tarasius' mercy for repentant iconoclasts, and appealed for help to high-ranking acquaintances, Methodius among them.[92] The elderly Ignatius soon won reinstatement in his old position of sceuophylax of St. Sophia, which he held by the time he revised his *Life of Nicephorus* and his dictionary of writers, around 845.[93] Thus, after an absence of some thirty years, he once again became the colleague of his friend Nicephorus, who remained chartophylax despite brief rustication in a monastery.[94] Ignatius was still alive in 847, when he wrote hymns on the translation of the relics of Patriarch Nicephorus and on the death of Methodius, but probably died not much later.[95]

The dictionary of authors that we can conjecturally assign to Ignatius, though lost in its original form, apparently survives in about two dozen excerpts in Photius' *Bibliotheca* and about eight hundred entries in the *Suda*, including thirteen passages shared by both works. Some of these passages originally derive from the Greek translation of St. Jerome's *Famous Men*, a fourth-century dictionary of ecclesiastical authors, and from the church histories of Eusebius, Philostorgius, and Theodore the Lector. Yet most of the passages come from the sixth-century scholar Hesychius of Miletus, to judge from a sentence in the *Suda*'s entry on Hesychius: "He wrote a *Name-Finder; or, Register of Famous Men in Scholarship*, of which this book is an epitome." Since the whole *Suda* could hardly be called an epitome of Hesychius' *Name-Finder*, these words must have been copied from the *Suda*'s source, which has therefore become known as the Hesychius Epitome. The *Suda* continues, "However, in the *Register of Famous Men in Scholarship* [Hesychius] gives entries for none of the teachers of the Church," so that Hesychius cannot have been the one who added the entries on ecclesiastical authors from Jerome and the church historians. These were presumably inserted by the compiler of the Hesychius Epitome, who alphabetized all the entries and added at least three more on authors later than Hesychius.[96]

[92] See Ignatius, *Life of Tarasius* 31, and *Letters*, nos. 31, 38, and 42 (his repentance; cf. Mango, *Correspondence*, pp. 11–12 and 19–20, with pp. 7–8 on the *Life of Tarasius*) and nos. 39, 52, 55, and 58 (his appeals for help to Methodius and others).

[93] See Mango, *Correspondence*, pp. 8–12 and 20–21. Note that the article on Ignatius in the *Suda*, I 84, presumably taken from the revised version of the dictionary, mentions both his position as sceuophylax and his *Life of Nicephorus*.

[94] For letters to Nicephorus the Chartophylax during this time, see Ignatius, *Letters*, nos. 34–36, 37 (for Nicephorus' stay at a monastery on the island of Oxia), 38, 40–48, 59–63, and 64 (a letter from Nicephorus to Ignatius).

[95] Mango, *Correspondence*, pp. 15–16.

[96] On Hesychius and the Hesychius Epitome, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 80 and 270–78, citing *Suda* H 61 and the detailed and persuasive arguments of Wentzel,

Several clues point to Ignatius as that compiler. First, Ignatius was an unusually prolific writer and the only significant scholar of his time with strong interests in both biography and classical literature.[97] Moreover, because the latest entry in Jerome's *Famous Men* is on Jerome, and the latest entry from Hesychius' *Name-Finder* is on Hesychius, we might expect the compiler and continuer of those two dictionaries to have concluded his work with an entry on himself in imitation of his two predecessors. The latest entry preserved from the Hesychius Epitome reads in the *Suda*: "Ignatius, deacon and sceuophylax of the Great Church of Constantinople and formerly metropolitan of Nicaea, grammarian. He wrote biographies of Tarasius and Nicephorus the holy patriarchs of blessed memory, funeral elegies, letters, iambic verses concerning Thomas the rebel, which they call *On Thomas*, and other works."[98] If the compiler of the Hesychius Epitome did add an autobiographical entry and the *Suda* included it, Ignatius compiled the Hesychius Epitome.

This entry on Ignatius as we have it must be later than 843, since it mentions the *Life of Tarasius*, in which Ignatius deplores his compromises with the iconoclasts. The entry carefully avoids mentioning that Ignatius had served under iconoclast emperors. It may well list his positions in the order in which he had assumed them: deacon under Tarasius (784–806), sceuophylax under Patriarch Nicephorus (806–15), metropolitan of Nicaea from about 815 to 825, grammarian from about 830, and by 845 all these except metropolitan of Nicaea, which is described as a former post. The entry's list of Ignatius' writings includes some minor compositions and may originally have named even more, which the editor of the *Suda* summarized as "other works." The entry gives Ignatius a remarkable prominence for such a relatively minor and dubiously orthodox writer, since the only other authors definitely included in the Hesychius Epitome after Hesychius were George of Pisidia and John of Damascus, both much more famous than Ignatius. Even one of Ignatius' students would have been unlikely to expose himself to pious criticism by writing such an entry.

Probably decisive for Ignatius' authorship is the fact that the entry on Ignatius must have been revised after 843, even though the rest of the Hesychius Epitome was not. That the entry on John of Damascus fails to mention his anti-iconoclast writings, which were his best-known works, shows that it was composed by someone who needed to avoid the issue of icons, a necessity only before 842. Similarly, the Hesychius Epitome must have omitted the celebrated iconophile writers Tarasius, Nicephorus, and Theodore of Studius, because all three are missing from the *Suda* but would surely have been included if the editor of the *Suda* had found them in his source. Evidently after 842 the compiler of the Hesychius Epitome made no changes in the already alphabetized entries in the main part of his work and revised only his autobiography at the end—that is, the entry on

Griechische Übersetzung. The marginal entry in *Suda* T 901 on Trajan the Patrician may also be derived from the Hesychius Epitome; see above, pp. 8–9 and n. 29.

[97] For Ignatius' interest in classical literature, see especially Browning, "Ignace."

[98] *Suda* I 84.

Ignatius. Since no one else had a reason to revise the entry on Ignatius without revising the rest of the work, the case for Ignatius' authorship of the Hesychius Epitome appears conclusive.

Rather more than half the material in the Hesychius Epitome seems to have survived, if we are to judge from the fact that the *Suda* shows parallels to thirteen of the twenty-three biographies of authors found in Photius' *Bibliotheca*.[99] Based on several good sources that cannot have been widely known at the time, the Hesychius Epitome marked a significant advance in contemporary Byzantine knowledge of the history of earlier Greek literature going back to Homer. Comprehensive, succinct, and alphabetically arranged, it was convenient to consult, as Ignatius presumably intended it to be when he compiled it for use in his own teaching and research. The Hesychius Epitome was eventually lost only because it met the fate of most reference works, becoming obsolescent when subsumed into a newer and more comprehensive compilation, the *Suda*.

When Photius used the Hesychius Epitome for his *Bibliotheca* in 845, he may have had either the original version, compiled in the 830's, or the version with the minor changes that Ignatius made to his autobiography around 845. We know from his letters that Ignatius tried to escape his exile around 843 by soliciting help from several well-connected iconophiles. These may well have included the wealthy and aristocratic Photius, whose uncle was married to a sister of the empress Theodora and whose father had been an iconophile confessor and nephew of the patriarch Tarasius. Ignatius could claim a certain connection with Photius, probably as a personal acquaintance, and at least as an old protégé of his great-uncle Tarasius. Sending a young man known for his voracious reading a copy of a comprehensive dictionary of writers would have been an excellent way to win his favor. The *Bibliotheca* shows that Photius, whether or not he helped Ignatius, put the Hesychius Epitome to good use.

As we have seen, Photius was the son of Sergius Confessor, born around 813, and exiled together with his father and the rest of his family, apparently in 833.[100] By then Photius must have completed his secondary education. He had probably met Ignatius the Deacon and may even have studied with him after Ignatius took up his teaching post at Constantinople around 830. This was roughly the

[99] See Treadgold, *Nature*, pp. 52–66 and especially 188–89 (a table of parallels to the *Bibliotheca* in the *Suda* and Theodore the Lector). The suggestion of Markopoulos, "New Evidence," pp. 7–8, that "we view any correspondences between the *Bibliotheca* and the [Hesychius] *Epitome* as deriving from a common source, on which both authors, Photios and Ignatios, happen to be drawing" incorrectly assumes that the *Suda* copied the whole Hesychius Epitome; certainly the *Biblotheca* and the *Suda* (not Ignatius) drew on "a common source," which was the complete text of the Hesychius Epitome, now lost as such.

[100] Strangely, there is no satisfactory modern or Byzantine biography of Photius. On his early life, see most recently Treadgold, "Photius," and the references in my footnotes. On Photius' writings, see also Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 7–41, Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, pp. 205–35, and Wilson, *Scholars*, pp. 89–119; and on Photius' treatment of historians, see Croke, "Tradition." On Photius' ecclesiastical career, see Hussey, *Orthodox Church*, pp. 69–101, and still Dvornik, *Photian Schism*.

time when Photius compiled his first scholarly work, a lexicon, of which we apparently have a later edition. During his family's exile Photius seems to have spent most of his time reading and taking notes on the books he describes in his *Bibliotheca*, books that he presumably obtained from his father and other relatives or acquaintances. Very soon after returning from exile and recovering his family property in 842, Photius wrote another work, an attack on the Paulician heretics entitled *Against the Manichaeans*, of which we have only a later version. Probably a direct descendant of the emperor Constantine V and his Khazar wife, Photius seems to have been snub-nosed and far from handsome, if we are to judge from an early sketch of him and his nickname, "Khazarface."[101]

Photius' well-deserved reputation as the greatest scholar of his day brought him a political and ecclesiastical career much like those of the patriarchs Tarasius and Nicephorus, but even more controversial. Photius became protoasecretis sometime after 845, then patriarch of Constantinople after the deposition of the patriarch Ignatius in 858. Photius' consecration as patriarch was disputed from the start by a party of Byzantine churchmen and soon by the pope, causing the temporary but acrimonious Photian Schism between the Eastern and Western churches. Deposed and exiled to a monastery near Constantinople after the accession of Basil I and the restoration of Ignatius in 867, Photius managed to win Basil's favor around 872 and to become tutor to Basil's sons. On the patriarch Ignatius' death in 877, Basil returned Photius to the patriarchate, and in the end gained papal approval for him. Photius was finally deposed and exiled again at the accession of his former student Leo VI in 886, dying in exile sometime after 892. Besides his *Bibliotheca*, *Lexicon*, and *Against the Manichaeans*, Photius' writings include letters, sermons, theological treatises, and another unconventional miscellany called the *Amphilochia*, which all display his learning and intelligence.

The *Bibliotheca* can be dated fairly securely to the spring of 845, when Photius was in his early thirties.[102] The conventional modern title (*Library*) implies

[101] See Pseudo-Symeon, p. 673.19, and on Photius' ancestry p. 91 and n. 45 above. The sketch is reproduced as the frontispiece of Treadgold, *Nature*, p. ii.

[102] On the *Bibliotheca*, see Treadgold, *Nature*, especially pp. 16–36 (with Hägg and Treadgold, "Preface," for minor corrections to my reconstruction of the preface). I briefly explain in Treadgold, "Photius," pp. 9–14 and nn. 32, 33, 35, 38, and 44, my reasons for rejecting some subsequent interpretations of the *Bibliotheca*, particularly those of Schamp, *Photios*, who believes that Photius' preface and embassy are literary fictions and that the Hesychius Epitome never existed. Others have advanced still more fantastic theories that the hundreds of books described in the *Bibliotheca* were read by some sort of "reading circle," or by Photius in Baghdad (which could not have been the destination of an embassy at the time, since the capital of the caliphate had moved to Samarra). Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 7–25, discusses the various hypotheses without rejecting any of them, not even the glaring error that Photius went to Baghdad (p. 8). Markopoulos, "New Evidence," pp. 13–14, argues for a late date for the *Bibliotheca*, because "it is difficult to imagine" that Photius could have read books "in his youth" to which he referred "in advanced age"; but, as I wrote in Treadgold, *Nature*, p. 32, "Especially if Photius owned the book, had taken notes on it, or reread it, he could have displayed detailed knowledge of it many years after his original reading." Moreover, the fact that most of the books Photius mentions in his other works

merely that the work describes many books, though Photius probably did own many of them. He addresses the *Bibliotheca* to his brother, Tarasius, observing that it fulfills Tarasius' request for an account of Photius' reading before his impending departure on an embassy "to the Assyrians." These "Assyrians" must be the Arabs of the Abbasid caliphate, whose capital was then in ancient Assyria at Samarra, not Baghdad. The embassy appears to have been that of 845, the only embassy the Byzantines sent to Samarra. Photius goes on to say that he found a secretary and prepared his work more quickly than Tarasius might have expected, to serve as a memento during Photius' absence. Next Photius includes a list of the books he describes, observing at the end that it satisfies his brother's request.[103] After summarizing the books at length, in a final note Photius adds that he has included everything he remembers reading except school texts, and that if he returns safely from his embassy he may read many more books and describe them for his brother as well. In fact, most of the books mentioned in Photius' other writings are absent from the *Bibliotheca*, demonstrating that Photius completed it early in his career and went on to read many more books later. Any idea that the *Bibliotheca* includes nearly everything that Photius read during his lifetime, or that was available at Constantinople in his time, is certainly mistaken.[104]

The descriptions in the *Bibliotheca* take up about a thousand printed pages. They include reviews, summaries, and lengthy excerpts of about four hundred books, some of which, like the complete histories of Diodorus Siculus or Cassius Dio, were themselves extremely long. The latter half of the *Bibliotheca* consists almost entirely of excerpts, without reviews like those in the first half. Obviously Photius could not have written or dictated all this material during whatever time he had free between his brother's request and the departure of his embassy, and his brother could hardly have expected anything as long as he actually received. Photius must therefore have warmed to his task and turned what he had begun as a private letter into a monumental memoir of his reading. Evidently he first dictated to his secretary brief descriptions of many of the books, glancing at those he owned and recalling others. While Photius dictated, he looked up some authors in Ignatius' Hesychius Epitome and added facts from it to his reviews of their books. Then, about halfway through, he departed on his embassy, leaving his secretary a large file of old reading notes to copy. Working in this way, Photius may have

are not described in the *Bibliotheca*, which he depicts as a virtually complete record of his reading, indicates that he finished it early in life, before he had read many other books. (See Treadgold, *Nature*, pp. 32–34 and 185–87.)

[103] Indefensibly, Henry's edition of the *Bibliotheca* omits this table of contents, which appears in both the original MSS (one of which is slightly damaged) and must go back to Photius himself. The only edition of the table to date is in Martini, "Studien," pp. 299–318. See Photius' remark at the end of the table: "with which things note, dearest brother [Tarasius], that what you earnestly requested also comes to an end." The table seems decisive evidence against those who think that the preface is a literary fiction; among such scholars, Schamp, *Photios*, p. 36, alludes to the table only to ignore it.

[104] See Treadgold, *Nature*, pp. 32–34.

taken about three weeks to finish his task, not counting the time the secretary took to copy the notes at the end.[105]

While the *Bibliotheca* is by no means a formal history of literature, or indeed a formal composition of any kind, it includes vast amounts of material of historical value. Photius reviews forty-two historians from Herodotus and Ctesias of Cnidus to the patriarch Nicephorus and Sergius Confessor, often including extensive excerpts and summaries of parts of their works that are otherwise lost. Photius also covers theology, novels, orations, biographies, and many other types of literature. Besides excerpts from the Hesychius Epitome, Photius often takes information about authors from their own writings or makes deductions based on them. In many cases comparisons with texts that survive show that he made errors, largely because he relied on his memory, which was good but far from photographic. He obviously worked in haste, and he acknowledges in his preface that he arranged the reviews in whatever order the books occurred to him. Yet the historical evidence he preserves is more important than the contents of most conventional histories. Better than any other Byzantine work, the *Bibliotheca* gives us a tour of the whole of ancient and early medieval Greek literature. Our guide is unsystematic and rambling but enthusiastic and perceptive. Though in the first place the *Bibliotheca* seems really to have been meant only for the author and his brother, it eventually found a select readership of scholars. Photius' reviews of his authors' styles show a strong preference for the classicizing Greek that characterized the formal literature of his times and those that followed.[106]

Why did Ignatius the Deacon and Photius, ambitious men who were obviously interested in history and wrote in several different genres, not write contemporary histories, as other Byzantine scholars had done and were to do? For Ignatius, his personal compromises with Iconoclasm would have made a full history of the iconoclast period even more awkward to write than his saints' lives were. At first Photius could have composed a contemporary history only by rewriting his own father's work, which might have implied a lack of respect for it that he probably felt but was reluctant to admit. Later his duties as patriarch of Constantinople left him little time for secular writing, and his parlous position after he was deposed would have deterred him from writing a history of the controversies in which he was embroiled. Moreover, most recent histories had been short and unpretentious, except for the combined effort of George Syncellus and Theophanes Confessor, which after becoming rare under Iconoclasm seems not to have been known even to Ignatius or Photius in the 840's. Besides, Ignatius and Photius may well have found contemporary affairs a more restricted and less interesting subject than the vast sweep of earlier history that they surveyed in the Hesychius Epitome and the *Bibliotheca*.

105 On Photius' composition of the *Bibliotheca*, see Treadgold, *Nature*, especially pp. 37–96; for the estimate of three weeks, see Treadgold, "Photius," p. 12 and n. 40.

106 See especially Browning, "Language," pp. 116–17.

The Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes

Not long after the restoration of icons in 843, the *Chronography* of Theophanes came into circulation and won the respect that iconophiles could be expected to accord an informative work by an iconophile confessor.[107] About 850 the *Chronography* was epitomized by an unknown writer, who turned its annalistic entries into a connected narrative and continued it down to the death of Michael II, in 829.[108] This Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829, though lost today in its original form, along with its compiler's name, was used by the chronicler George the Monk soon after its completion, and by Symeon the Logothete and Pseudo-Symeon about a century later. It evidently began not with the Creation, as was customary for chronicles, but with the accession of Diocletian in 284, the point at which Theophanes had begun continuing George Syncellus. Though both George the Monk and Symeon later began with the Creation, the parts of their histories before 284 are so different from each other that they cannot have a common source, and neither resembles the work of George Syncellus. Therefore the epitomator of Theophanes either failed to find a copy of George Syncellus' *Selection* or felt it was too technical and disorganized to convert into a satisfactory literary history. This Epitome of Theophanes must have ended with 829, because the parallels between George the Monk and Symeon the Logothete cease with that year.

The author of the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes cannot, however, have finished writing before 844, because both George and Symeon drew upon it to report the abdication of the emperor Michael I, in 813, in almost exactly the same words: "Having heard [that Leo V had been proclaimed emperor], and having assumed monastic garb together with his wife and children, Michael was

[107] For circulation of Theophanes' work "c. 840," see Mango, "Life," especially p. 192.

[108] On the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829 and its later Continuation from 829 to 844, see Treadgold, "Chronological Accuracy" (in which, however, I failed to notice that Pseudo-Symeon also used the epitome). Note that instead of this Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes some modern scholars have postulated a longer chronicle they call simply the "Epitome," which began with the Creation, was supposedly composed by Trajan the Patrician, and was later continued to 842; see Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica* I, pp. 515–18, with his bibliography. All these conjectures, however, are incompatible with the evidence, especially now that the chronicle of Symeon the Logothete has been properly edited. Yet Wahlgren, *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon* I, pp. 118*–19*, is also mistaken that Symeon and George the Monk made direct use of Theophanes' *Chronography*, because they both used only the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829. (See Treadgold, "Chronological Accuracy," pp. 168–71.) The Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829 used by George and Symeon cannot be the same as the close paraphrase of Theophanes mostly preserved in *Parisinus graecus* 1710 (which breaks off with 803) and its apograph *Parisinus graecus* 1709 (which breaks off with 812); though because of damage to the last parts of these MSS we cannot be sure whether they continued after 813, they omit (according to the apparatus of de Boor's edition of Theophanes) an earlier passage on an Arab invasion of Anatolia (in 803?) that is shared by George the Monk (II, pp. 772.26–774.2) and Symeon (I, 125.6) and evidently belonged to their common source. (See Treadgold, "Chronological Accuracy," pp. 169–70.)

exiled to the island nearest the city, on which island he also died."[109] Since Michael I died in an island monastery near Constantinople in 844, the common source of George and Symeon must have been completed after that date.[110] Because the parallels between George and Symeon show that the author of their common source was an ardent iconophile, one apparent reason for him to have stopped with 829 is that he wrote under the regency of Theodora (842–56) and was unwilling either to accept the pious fiction of her husband's deathbed repentance or to risk offending her by recording that Theophilus had died an unrepentant iconoclast.

Besides drawing on the genuine Symeon's summary of the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829, Pseudo-Symeon must also have consulted the original text of this epitome for one part of his chronicle. Although this portion shows numerous verbal parallels with George the Monk and some parallels with the authentic Symeon, Pseudo-Symeon includes enough information that is not in George to prove that here his source was neither George nor Symeon but their common source. In this section Pseudo-Symeon describes the iconoclast activities of John the Grammarian, a comet in the form of a headless man that presaged disaster, an extended debate between Leo V and the iconophile bishops and abbots, and Leo's enforcement of Iconoclasm under the new patriarch, Theodotus (815–21).[111] Thus the part of the Epitome of Theophanes that continued Theophanes to 829 was evidently a source of a certain length and historical interest.

Besides the Epitome of Theophanes that continued until 829, Symeon used a further continuation from 829 to about 844, which was unknown to George and known to Pseudo-Symeon only by way of Symeon. Though the concluding date of this further continuation can only be conjectured, from 829 to about 844 the twenty entries preserved by Symeon are evidently in correct chronological order, with an average of one entry every nine months and no gap longer than two and a half years. Symeon's subsequent entry, datable to 855, leaves a gap of eleven years and begins a sequence that is out of chronological order, since the next datable entry concerns the death of Patriarch Methodius, in 847. Thus the

109 Cf. George the Monk II, p. 776.20–25 (with one minor addition), with Symeon I, 127.4. This text implies that Michael died on the island of Prote, agreeing with Nicetas the Paphlagonian, *Life of Ignatius* 493B, Scylitzes, p. 8.85, and Zonaras, *Epitome* XV.18.20, rather than Plate, which was where Michael died according to the *Necrologium* (Grierson, "Tombs," pp. 55–56) and *Theophanes Continuatus* I.10. Since the epitome was a contemporary source and indicates that the island was Prote not by naming it but by saying that it was the nearest to Constantinople, Prote may well be right; see below, p. 189 and n. 133.

110 Cf. Grierson, "Tombs," pp. 55–56 and n. 168.

111 Cf. Pseudo-Symeon, p. 606.11–22, with George the Monk II, p. 778.8–15, and Symeon I, 128.5 (on John); Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 606.22–607.9, with George the Monk II, pp. 777.20–778.7, and Symeon I, 128.4 (on the comet); Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 607.10–608.21, with George the Monk II, pp. 778.16–786.16, and Symeon I, 128.6 (the debate over icons); and Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 608.22–609.21, with George the Monk II, p. 777.8–20, and Symeon I, 128.7–9. Note that George has rearranged this material in a less logical order, and that Pseudo-Symeon, p. 606.11–22, also includes material from the *Scriptor Incertus*, 59. 257–61.307 Iadevaia (349.18–351.13 Bekker).

continuation seems to have ended around 844. The author probably stopped then because he wanted to record the restoration of the icons in 843 but evidently detested Theodora's minister Theoctistus, who had taken a leading part in restoring the icons. Rather than end his work with an episode so much to Theoctistus' credit, the author added that Theoctistus failed in his attempt to retake Crete, was defeated by the Arabs in Anatolia, provoked the flight of the valorous Theophanes Pharganus to the caliphate, deceitfully forced Theodora's brother Bardas into exile, and built himself a heavily guarded mansion next to the imperial palace.[112]

This second continuation was surely composed several years after 844, because the writer mentions that Theophanes Pharganus returned to the empire "some years later," though this must have happened sometime before 855, when he helped Bardas assassinate Theoctistus. In fact, we can safely assume that the continuer wrote after 855, since he would hardly have dared criticize Theoctistus so sharply while that minister remained the most powerful man in the empire. On the other hand, the continuer must have written before 866, because he remarked that the Trullus Palace of the former patriarch John the Grammarian remained uninhabited, though we know that it was converted into a monastery in 865 or 866.[113] The first important event the continuer omitted was the death of Patriarch Methodius, in 847, and his replacement by Patriarch Ignatius (847–58 and 867–77). The continuer's apparent reluctance to express an opinion about Ignatius, especially a favorable one, would be most understandable after 858, when Ignatius was forced out of the patriarchate by Bardas, Michael III's most powerful adviser.

Was the author of the original Epitome of Theophanes to 829, who wrote between 844 and 856, the same as the author of its Continuation from 829 to 844, who wrote between 858 and 866? The dates obviously allow that possibility, and Byzantine historians were never very numerous. Although the original epitome apparently recorded events before 829 with fewer details than the continuation supplied for later events, this might be expected of a writer who intended mainly to rewrite Theophanes and had probably been quite young in 829. Both the earlier Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829 and its further Continuation from 829 to 844 ended at least twelve and fourteen years before they were composed, seemingly because their author was reluctant to comment on current events. While the original epitome avoided either praising Theophilus or condemning him and offending Theodora, after Theodora's regency the continuer was free to condemn Theophilus, to denounce Theodora's adviser Theoctistus,

[112] Symeon I, 131.2–5; cf. Treadgold, "Chronological Accuracy," pp. 171–93.

[113] Cf. Symeon I, 130.26 (on the Trullus Palace), with Treadgold, "Chronological Accuracy," pp. 180, 192, 193, and 194. The continuer also speaks of the poetess Cassia as if she were dead (Symeon I, 130.5), but this is of little use in dating the continuation, because the date of her death is unknown; if the analysis suggested here is correct, she died before c. 860. The parenthesis in Symeon I, 130.12, referring to Leo VI's removing the silver from the coffin of Theophilus' daughter Maria, was apparently added by Symeon himself from another source.

and to imply that in 830 Theophilus had preferred the beautiful poetess Cassia before choosing Theodora in a bride show. Yet the Continuation from 829 to 844 still avoided either criticizing Patriarch Ignatius or praising him and offending Bardas. In each case the writer seems to have been a principled but prudent official, unwilling either to misrepresent his opinions or to damage his career by expressing them unseasonably. So the same man seems more likely than not to have written the original epitome around 850 and its continuation around 860.

The author of the Continuation from 829 to 844 showed the knowledge of political and military events to be expected of a relatively low-ranking functionary, perhaps a secretary in the chancery. Besides being well informed about dates, he was familiar with the palace buildings and apparently witnessed events that occurred in the Hippodrome and on Theophilus' regular visits to the capital's suburb of Blachernae.[114] The writer seems to have had accurate information that the renegade Theophobus fled the caliphate with fourteen thousand men, that the Arabs attacked Amorium with some fifty thousand men, and that Theophilus paid two pounds of gold for a misappropriated horse and a hundred nomismata to repair the equestrian statue of Justinian.[115] Yet the author appears to have ranked too low to be present at Theophilus' bride show, in 830, of which he gives a mostly accurate but slightly romanticized account; and his rather fanciful stories of John the Grammarian's magic arts and Theophilus' promotion of Leo the Philosopher seem to be based on contemporary rumors rather than firsthand knowledge.[116] A man of strongly held views, the continuer praised Cassia, Theophanes Pharganus, and Theophilus' generals Alexius Musele and Manuel, while criticizing Theophilus, Theoctistus, and Theodora's brother Petronas.[117]

The writer, if he was one writer and not two, may have been born around 810, since he had personal experience of events as early as 829 and was still concerned with his career around 860. Yet he was old enough to have heard opinions about the emperor Nicephorus I (802–11) that differed from the unqualified contempt he found in Theophanes' *Chronography*. Passages not in Theophanes but common to both George the Monk and Symeon report that Nicephorus had not ordered the blinding of the rebel Bardanes Turcus, as the *Chronography* claims he had, and that Nicephorus' wisdom and eloquence impressed the invading Arab caliph.[118] The author of the Epitome of Theophanes to 829 was also a man of some education

[114] Symeon I, 130.9, 23, and 36 (palace buildings), 130.6 and 24 (Hippodrome), and 130.10, 13, and 31 (Blachernae).

[115] Symeon I, 130.8 (14,000 renegades), 32 (50,000 Arabs), 31 (2 lbs. gold), and 40 (100 nomismata).

[116] Symeon I, 130.2 (Theophilus' bride show), 25 (John's magic), and 33–35 (Leo the Philosopher). On Theophilus' bride show, and recent unfounded speculation that it and other bride shows were fictional, see now Treadgold, "Historicity," especially pp. 42–45.

[117] Symeon I, 130.3 and 5 (where Cassia is called "Icasia," perhaps because of a misreading by Symeon), 130.10 (Petronas), 130.11 (Alexius), 130.15 and 28 (Manuel), and 131.3–5 (Theoctistus).

[118] Cf. George the Monk II, pp. 772–74, and Symeon I, 125.5–6, with Theophanes A.M. 6296.

and literary ability. His style was probably more elevated than Theophanes', and he rearranged his material capably to reassemble stories that the *Chronography* had divided into annual entries.[119] The material taken from the Continuation from 829 to 844 as preserved in Symeon's chronicle is especially lively and informative, making Symeon our best narrative source for the reign of Theophilus.

George the Monk

After this anonymous epitomator and continuer (or continuers) of Theophanes, the next historian known to us is George the Monk, author of a lengthy work oddly titled *Concise Chronicle*.[120] George begins with the Creation and nominally ends with 867 but says nothing about himself. In the titles of most of our manuscripts he is identified only as "monk" and "sinner," and since the latter is an epithet that humble monks often applied to themselves, it adds nothing of biographical interest. In the titles of a few of our manuscripts George is confused with George Syncellus or the eleventh-century historian George Cedrenus. Yet in the title of one eleventh-century manuscript the author of the *Concise Chronicle* is called "George the Ecumenical Teacher," assigning him the post at the Patriarchal School held earlier by Ignatius the Deacon.[121] Because this title betrays no apparent confusion with another writer, it probably means that George, who was well read if not well educated, became Ecumenical Teacher sometime after completing his chronicle, when his new position was added to his name in some manuscripts but not in others.

[119] On the epitomator's rearrangement of Theophanes, see Treadgold, "Chronological Accuracy," pp. 168–69. On his style, note that George uses the Atticizing double tau in some passages that he shares with Symeon, but the ordinary double sigma in many passages of his own; cf. George the Monk II, p. 776.17 and Symeon I, 127.3 (μετὰ μεγάλης ἥττης), and George the Monk II, p. 789.9 (κατορύττεται) and Symeon I, 128.13 (κατορύττουσιν), but George the Monk II, pp. 785.12 (διαφυλάσσειν) and 792.5 (γλῶσσαν). Though such variations in spelling are almost our only clues to the stylistic level of this lost text, they cannot be conclusive, because they may have been altered by copyists. (E.g., in George's preface, I, p. 2.24, for γλώττης we should probably read γλώσσης, as in two of the MSS.)

[120] The secondary literature on George the Monk is not very satisfactory, but see Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 43–52, de Boor, *Georgius*, I, pp. v–lxxxiii, Scott, "Byzantine Chronicle," pp. 45–46, E. Jeffreys, "Malalas," pp. 261–62, Afinogenov, "Some Observations," Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* II, pp. 213–32, Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 347–51, and *PmbZ* I, *Prolegomena* p. 24. Here I have avoided the problems connected with the version of George's chronicle that is largely but not entirely preserved in *Coislinianus* 305, which is written in a more sophisticated Greek than the version edited by de Boor. Since any satisfactory solution will require a proper study of the unpublished *Coislinianus* 305, I have with some misgivings followed the example of Kazhdan, *History* II, p. 45: "We shall ignore the problem of manuscript tradition, and accept for better or worse the edition of de Boor as the original of [George's] *Chronicle*."

[121] See de Boor, *Georgius*, I, pp. xx (Ecumenical Teacher), xxx–xxxi (confusion with George Cedrenus), and xlvii–xlviii and lii–liii (confusion with George Syncellus). On the Ecumenical Teacher, see p. 103 and n. 90 above.

A number of our manuscripts of George's chronicle include supplementary material that later copyists borrowed from the chronicle of Symeon the Logothete up to 948, though Symeon himself seems not to have known George's chronicle and certainly did not continue it, as some modern scholars have believed. In its original form, without the additions from Symeon, George's chronicle concludes its narrative with the restoration of icons in 843. George also gives numbers of years for the full length of the reign of Michael III (842–67), including the years when Michael reigned with his mother Theodora and by himself. While one could possibly argue that these numbers were added later, George seems to confirm they are his own by adding a calculation that 555 years had elapsed from Constantine I to Michael III, evidently meaning between Constantine's victory over Maxentius in 312 and Michael's murder (A.D. 867 – 555 = 312), for a total of 6,375 years since the Creation (A.M. 6375 = A.D. 867).[122] This computation indicates that George stopped writing after 867 but before 882, the end of the reign of Michael's successor, Basil I.

The latest source that George consulted for his *Concise Chronicle* was evidently a summary by Peter the Sicilian of Peter's own treatise against the Paulician heretics. Peter was an abbot, apparently of a monastery in Constantinople, whom Basil I sent in 869–70 as an envoy to the Paulicians in their stronghold of Tephrice, on the Arab frontier. Peter finished his treatise in 870 or 871 and probably composed his summary around the same time, because it appears in its unique manuscript along with his original work and other works that he wrote just after it. After Photius was deposed from his patriarchate, in 867, he plagiarized Peter's treatise around 872, very soon after its completion, for his own treatise against the Paulicians.[123] George the Monk must therefore have finished his chronicle not

[122] Cf. George the Monk II, pp. 489–90 (which shows that George considered Constantine's reign to have begun with his victory over Maxentius) and 804. The numbers of years that George gave for Michael's entire reign, his reign with his mother Theodora, and his reign alone are not quite certain, because our MSS are contradictory and some have been altered. (See de Boor's apparatus on p. 801.) The numbers that de Boor prints in his text are self-consistent but historically not quite accurate: twenty-five years total (actually 25 years 8 months), of which fourteen were with Theodora (actually 14 years 2 months) and eleven years and three months by himself (actually 11 years 6 months, including his joint reign with Basil I of 1 year 4 months); perhaps in the last instance we should read six months instead of three (ϛʹ for γʹ), making a total of twenty-five years if we round down the six months. Afinogenov, "Date," pp. 437–38, believes that all these numbers are interpolated, but overlooks the final computation from the Creation to Michael III. George's source for this computation was an updated version of Nicephorus' *Concise Chronography*, p. 102, which counts 6,350 years from the Creation to "Theophilus, indiction 5." The number 6,350 is one year off, since Theophilus died on January 20, 842, in a fifth indiction (which began on September 1, 841) but before A.M. 6350 (which began only on March 21, 842, according to the ninth-century Byzantine era; see Grumel, *Chronologie*, pp. 124–28). George probably arrived at his incorrect length for Michael III's reign by subtracting the erroneous year for Theophilus' death in the *Concise Chronography* from the correct year for Michael's death (A.M. 6375 – A.M. 6350 = 25 years).

[123] See Lemerle, "Histoire," pp. 17–31, referring to George the Monk II pp. 718–19. Afinogenov, "Date," pp. 439–41, at first argued unconvincingly that this passage in George's text is probably an interpolation (though George seems to refer to it in his preface

merely after 867 but after 870. Since we shall see that George had access not just to Peter's treatise but to many other books, he probably lived in Constantinople, as we would expect if he later became Ecumenical Teacher there.

Why did George, writing after 870, cease to record events after the restoration of icons in 843? Like the Continuation of Theophanes that ended around 844, George probably ended his account before the accession of Patriarch Ignatius, in 847, in order to avoid the controversy over the conflicting claims of Ignatius and Photius to the patriarchate. If so, George presumably wrote before 877, when the controversy was more or less settled after Ignatius died and Photius succeeded him. Evidently George wrote while Ignatius was still patriarch but Photius had already found favor with Basil I, so that no prudent writer, especially one who hoped for promotion in the Church, would have flatly condemned either Photius or Ignatius. On the other hand, since George was a monk of limited education, who expresses his suspicion of secular learning and of excessive cleverness, his sympathies are likely to have been not with Photius but with Ignatius.[124] In particular, if George was rewarded for his undistinguished chronicle by being made Ecumenical Teacher, he is much likelier to have been appointed under Ignatius, a modestly educated former monk, than under the learned Photius. Since Photius won over Basil around 872, we may date the completion of George's chronicle around 875.[125]

As for George's earlier life, he reports remarkably few facts after 829, the conclusion of the Epitome of Theophanes that he used. During Theophilus' reign, apart from referring vaguely to famines, earthquakes, and other disasters, and condemning the iconoclast emperor in terms largely borrowed from an oration of Gregory of Nazianzus against the emperor Julian, George mentions only the Arab sack of Amorium in 838 and Arab attacks on the Cyclades, Crete, and Sicily that had actually happened under Michael II.[126] During Michael III's reign, the

[I, p. 3.12–23] and it appears in all our MSS, even if some transfer it to a different place), and that the abstract could in any case be earlier than Peter's *History* (despite Lemerle's persuasive case to the contrary). Now Afinogenov, "Manuscrit," p. 246, has abandoned the latter argument but argues, no more convincingly, that the references to Peter's abstract belong to a later version of George's chronicle by another hand (and that George himself must have written before Methodius' death, in 847, because he fails to call the late patriarch a saint when praising him). I agree, however, with Afinogenov, "Date," pp. 441–44, that the parallels between George's chronicle and the anonymous *Life of the Empress Theodora*, of uncertain date, probably indicate that the life is dependent on George's chronicle rather than the other way around.

[124] See George the Monk I, pp. 1–3 and 134.16–23. Kazhdan, *History* II, p. 48, plausibly interprets the latter passage as denouncing "contemporary 'teachers' who boast that they are able to save the empire ... but gain only shame. …" This sounds like a guarded reference to Photius and his supporters, probably made at an early stage of the compilation of the chronicle.

[125] The date when Photius was recalled from exile is known only approximately; cf. Hussey, *Orthodox Church*, p. 82, and Treadgold, "Prophecies," pp. 234–37.

[126] George the Monk II, pp. 797–801. (Note the parallels to Gregory of Nazianzus in the apparatus.) I suspect that George's source for the sack of Amorium was a lost account of the

sole event that George mentions, apart from the restoration of orthodoxy, is an Arab naval expedition of 842 under "Apodēnar" (Abū Dīnār?) that was supposedly directed against Constantinople, though it was actually wrecked in a storm off southern Anatolia and seems never to have been very threatening.[127] The scantiness of this information suggests that George had no narrative source for the period after 829 and was too young to remember much about it, though he probably did recall exaggerated rumors of the Arab expedition of 842.

We may therefore guess that George was born around 830, probably in or near Constantinople. He received only a basic education, since he makes many grammatical errors even in standard literary (*Koinē*) Greek and seems to have read none of the classical Greek authors, whom he cites only from quotations in the Church Fathers. He acknowledges his lack of learning in his preface, remarking, "It is better to stammer with truth than with deceit to speak like Plato."[128] Probably George entered a monastery in the capital not long after the restoration of icons in 843, at a time when monks enjoyed special prestige after the wholesale dismissal of the secular clergy for accepting Iconoclasm. George's monastery, however, is not likely to have been the Monastery of Studius, because George makes little if any use of Theodore of Studius' works and expresses admiration for the patriarch Methodius, who had been on unfriendly terms with the Studites.[129]

Presumably through his own reading as a monk, George acquired the extensive knowledge of scriptural and patristic texts that shows in his chronicle. His pages teem with references to and quotations from the Bible, the Fathers, and hagiography. Besides John Malalas and the Epitome of Theophanes to 829, George summarizes and quotes religious histories by Josephus, Eusebius of Caesarea, Rufinus of Aquileia, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Gelasius of Cyzicus, Theodore the Lector, and the patriarch Nicephorus, and saints' lives of historical interest like Stephen the Deacon's *Life of Stephen the Younger*, Theosterictus' *Life of Nicetas of Medicium*, and Ignatius the Deacon's *Life of Nicephorus*. George also makes use of a wide variety of exegetical and theological texts at appropriate places in his narrative of biblical

martyrdom of the Byzantine captives in 845, since none of the preserved accounts quite corresponds to his. On p. 797 George states, slightly erroneously, that there were eight commanders of themes in Anatolia in 838 (there were 7 then, though by 845 there were 8, including Cappadocia) and that the siege of Amorium lasted fifteen days (it probably lasted 13); see Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* I, p. 170 n. 1 (the length of the siege), and Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 322 and n. 443 (Cappadocia made a theme c. 840) and 440 n. 403 (7 themes in 838).

[127] George the Monk II, p. 801 (referring to Ἀποδήναρ); cf. Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* I, pp. 192–93, with the notes. George may, however, have learned some details about this expedition later, perhaps in an account of the restoration of icons.

[128] George the Monk I, p. 2.9–10. On George's Greek, see de Boor, *Georgius*, I, pp. lxxxii–lxxxiii.

[129] On monasticism in this period, see recently Morris, *Monks*, pp. 9–30, and on Methodius and the Studites, see recently Afinogenov, "Great Purge," pp. 84–90. Cf. George the Monk II, pp. 573 (noting one parallel to a work of Theodore's in the apparatus), 779 (a favorable reference to Theodore, but borrowed from Theosterictus, *Life of Nicetas*, chap. 35), and 802 (George's praise for Methodius).

and ecclesiastical history. In a number of passages he evidently drew upon texts that are now lost. George's ability to consult such a range of books demonstrates that he had access to at least one excellent library of religious works, whether in his monastery or at the patriarchate.[130]

George opens his chronicle with a preface in which he explains his plan to provide his readers with all the history that is truly useful in plain but dramatic language. After the preface comes the full title of George's work: *Concise Chronicle Collected and Combined from Different Chronographers and Exegetes by George the Monk, Sinner*. Lengthy though the chronicle is, George meant for it to be "concise" in the sense that it excludes secular material that he considered superfluous. As George explains in his preface, the text of his chronicle has three main parts. First George gives a brief account of Near Eastern, Greek, and Roman history from Adam down to the successors of Alexander the Great, mainly summarized from Malalas.[131] Second, George begins once more with Adam and gives an account of the same period that is almost seven times as long as the first and is mainly summarized from the Septuagint.[132] Intriguingly, for this section he seems to have consulted not George Syncellus but George Syncellus' main Greek source, which was probably the chronicle of Panodorus, perhaps in a later revision by Andronicus.[133] The third and longest part of the *Concise Chronicle* is on Roman imperial history from Julius Caesar to Michael III, for which the basic narrative is summarized from Malalas up to Diocletian and thereafter from the Epitome of Theophanes to 829, though those two sources are combined with many others.[134]

George introduces material from his sources without much regard for context, chronology, or accuracy, and with a preference for interpretations by the Fathers

[130] Besides the Bible, John Malalas, Theophanes (actually the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829), and various uncertain references, de Boor's apparatus to his edition of George records parallels to Basil of Caesarea, Josephus (with some spurious works), Theodoret, Anastasius of Sinai, John Chrysostom (with some spurious works), Palladius, Pseudo-Caesarius of Nazianzus, Athanasius, Epiphanius of Salamis, Clement of Alexandria, Mark the Hermit, Nilus of Ancyra, Isidore of Pelusium, Cyril of Alexandria, Nicephorus of Constantinople, Pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Eusebius of Caesarea, Cyril of Jerusalem, the *Apostolic Constitutions*, the *Passion of St. Patricius*, Hippolytus of Rome, Theodore the Lector, Theodore of Raïthu, the *Life of St. Sylvester*, Socrates of Constantinople, Gelasius of Cyzicus, Rufinus of Aquileia, George of Alexandria, Eustathius of Antioch, the *Life of Eustratius*, Maximus Confessor, Ephraem the Syrian, the *Acts of the Sixth Council*, the *Letter of the Eastern Patriarchs to Theophilus*, the *Life of Stephen the Younger*, the *Life of Nicetas of Medicium*, and Ignatius the Deacon's *Life of Nicephorus*. Afinogenov, "Lost 8th-Century Pamphlet," has argued plausibly that George also used a pamphlet attributable to Tarasius that I characterize somewhat differently as the continuation of Trajan's history attributable to Tarasius. (See above, pp. 17–25.)

[131] George the Monk I, pp. 6–43. Note that the book divisions printed in brackets in the text are not George's own; see de Boor, *Georgius*, I, pp. lxxviii–lxxxi.

[132] George the Monk I, pp. 43–293.

[133] Cf. W. Adler, *Time*, pp. 206–31, and above, pp. 68–69 and n. 122.

[134] George the Monk I, pp. 293–382 and II, pp. 383–803.

and edifying anecdotes of all kinds.[135] He often selects entertaining passages from his sources, and he particularly likes dog stories. For example, he excerpts from Malalas the miracle of Simon Magus' ferocious watchdog, which St. Peter forced to summon Simon with a human voice. George also repeats from Malalas the remarkable tricks performed by a blind dog brought to Constantinople in the reign of Justinian I. George may have used an oral source for the incident of a dog that identified his master's murderer, supposedly under Leo IV (775–80).[136] While such tales add interest to the *Concise Chronicle*, much more of the text is devoted to long quotations and summaries of sermons and commentaries that show George sought to edify more than to please. Though by any conventional standard George was a mediocre historian, he did try to write history, if of an unusual sort.[137] His aim was to distill from what he thought was a largely useless mass of historical material whatever could provide morally improving instruction, illustrated by the best interpretations he could find in the Fathers.

Taken on its own terms, George's *Concise Chronicle* was a substantial feat of biblical and patristic scholarship. While even the unusually long and scholarly histories of George Syncellus and Theophanes drew on a fairly limited range of sources, most of them histories, George summarized and combined far more texts, including many that were not historical. Unlike the history of Malalas, George's work was never pretentious or fraudulent.[138] To judge from the number of manuscripts that survive, the *Concise Chronicle* became more popular than any historical work since Procopius' *Wars*, except for the much shorter *Concise Chronography* of the patriarch Nicephorus, which is merely a collection of chronological tables for reference.[139] Although any well-trained Byzantine scholar like Ignatius the Deacon or Photius would probably have disdained George's chronicle, most moderately educated Byzantines would have appreciated its virtues and overlooked its faults. It may well have won George an appointment as Ecumenical Teacher under the patriarch Ignatius.

As we have seen, George's chronicle is our only fully preserved Byzantine historical work for almost a century after Theophanes finished his *Chronography*, unless we choose to call Photius' *Bibliotheca* a history of literature. Theophanes may be partly responsible for intimidating potential successors, because many Byzantines apparently regarded his account of history up to 813 as definitive, though they were willing to summarize it to make it more accessible and then to continue it.

[135] On George's negligence, see de Boor, *Georgius*, I, pp. lxxiii–lxxviii, even if de Boor seems to exaggerate George's stupidity somewhat. For George's edifying anecdotes and a more favorable judgment on him, see Ljubarskij, "George."

[136] George the Monk I, pp. 364–65, and II, 643–44 and 765–66; cf. Malalas X.32 and XVIII.51.

[137] Kazhdan, *History* II, p. 52, however, denies that George was trying to be an historian at all, describing him as "a pious entertainer."

[138] On Malalas and his fraudulent references to nonexistent sources, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 235–56, and "Byzantine World Histories."

[139] The comparison can be made from the lists of MSS in Colonna, *Storici*, pp. 51 (George), 87–88 (Nicephorus), and 109 (Procopius).

They seem to have taken Theophanes' treatment of contemporary history as a model, reporting later events with a concision similar to his. Continuing Nicephorus' similarly abbreviated *Concise History*, as Sergius Confessor did, left no more scope for contemporary history than continuing Theophanes. Since the ninth-century historians' brief and unambitious continuations of Theophanes or Nicephorus had little more to offer than bare facts, later historians generally preserved only those facts, which they summarized as parts of more extensive histories.

As a result, even though the few historical texts that survive from the ninth century have little to say about their own period, we are fairly well informed about it. Some of the credit goes to works that are not histories, like a variety of saints' lives and the letters of Ignatius the Deacon and Photius. Most of the credit, however, goes to the lost histories of Theognostus the Grammarian and Sergius Confessor, the Epitome of Theophanes to 829, and its Continuation from 829 to 844. While none of these has been preserved in its own right, they were incorporated wholesale into the historiography of the tenth century. We seem not to have lost much of what they recorded about their own times, and though most of their exact wording is lost, their authors appear not to have been striving for impressive literary effects. Thus the ninth-century Byzantine historians, like those of the seventh and eighth centuries, passed on a continuous record of events without producing sophisticated historical literature.

4
Historians under Leo the Wise

In the last quarter of the ninth century, during a period when both education and literature in general were recovering, Byzantine historiography seems to have been briefly interrupted.[1] The long, unedifying, and inconclusive controversy over the patriarchates of Ignatius and Photius would have made an intractable topic for any writer who wanted not to offend powerful people. Because Basil I had murdered Michael III but had been adopted by him, and Leo VI thought Michael was his father but had to pretend he was Basil's son, historians under Leo were unsure how to treat either Basil or Michael.[2] While almost everyone agreed that the restoration of icons in 843 had been a splendid triumph, subsequent events took a less favorable turn. The empire did win some victories over the Arabs and Paulicians in Anatolia, but these were overshadowed by the Arab conquest of Syracuse in 878, losses to the Bulgarians between 894 and 896, and the Arab sack of Thessalonica in 904. Although Leo VI (886–912) later acquired the epithet "the Wise," his reign seemed particularly contentious and unsuccessful. Although none of the reverses that the empire suffered was truly devastating, they were too important to ignore completely in any full-scale history. Historians therefore had to choose between recording both the good and the bad, giving prominence to the bad, or writing on restricted subjects. Thus nobody wrote a history of the twenty-six years of Leo's reign as such, but several historians wrote about parts of it or included it as part of a more comprehensive history.

Minor or spurious historians

The Arabs' sack of Thessalonica is the subject of John Caminiates' *On the Capture of Thessalonica*, which purports to be a contemporary account by an eyewitness and captive of the Arabs but is more likely to be a forgery composed in the

[1] On education and literature during this time, see especially Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, pp. 237–308, and Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 53–131.

[2] The argument of Mango, "Eudocia," that Leo VI was actually Michael III's son is practically conclusive, despite the doubts expressed by Tougher, *Reign*, pp. 42–67.

fifteenth century.[3] Of course, that no manuscript or mention of Caminiates can be found before that late date proves nothing, because our record is incomplete. That Caminiates' descriptions are vague, melodramatic, and unparalleled in other authors of the time may also be explicable but is suspicious, like the alleged abundance of naked Ethiopians among the Arab raiders. Although Caminiates' text shows verbal similarities with an account by John the Lector of the capture of Thessalonica by the Turks in 1430, these might conceivably have been borrowings by John the Lector from Caminiates—though a shared phrase that seems to refer to cannon fire is disturbing when applied to 904. Caminiates' allusion to the "profound peace" between Byzantium and the Bulgarians since their conversion to Christianity in 865 is also very hard to explain in 904, when the Bulgarian war of 894–96 was too recent for anyone to forget.[4]

The greatest obstacles to accepting the work's authenticity are Caminiates' inconsistent statements about himself and his family. He describes them as living together prosperously at Thessalonica, where he and his father, two brothers, and uncle were all lectors, minor clerics like the fifteenth-century John the Lector. Yet the title of Caminiates' work identifies him as a *kouboukleisios*, a chamberlain of the patriarch of Constantinople, who should have lived in the capital. Under interrogation by the Arabs, Caminiates' father strangely claims not to be a cleric of any sort. Then an apparently well-informed Arab identifies the father as "exarch of all Hellas," though Thessalonica was not in the Theme of Hellas, and describes Caminiates as a cleric in the imperial palace, which was in Constantinople but distinct from the patriarchate.[5] An historian who cannot decide where he and his father lived or what they did is probably spurious.

Another reason for doubting the text's authenticity is the coincidence that Caminiates was supposedly a lector named John who wrote a history closely resembling that of the John the Lector, who wrote in the fifteenth century. The parallels between the texts of John Caminiates and John the Lector suggest that

[3] See Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 125–31, drawing on his detailed arguments against the text's authenticity in Kazhdan, "Some Questions." For the most recent defense of Caminiates' authenticity, see Odorico, *Jean*, pp. 11–24. (Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 357–59, writing before Kazhdan, assumes Caminiates' authenticity.) See also Christides, "Once Again" (essentially accepting Kazhdan's objections but arguing that the text has authentic elements), Frendo, "*Miracles*" (defending Caminiates' authenticity), and the discussion and bibliography in Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* II, pp. 253–62 (cautiously defending Caminiates' authenticity). The parallels linking the *Life of Euthymius*, Symeon the Logothete, and John Caminiates identified by Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 21–24, probably indicate that Caminiates used Symeon as a direct or indirect source, while Symeon and the *Life of Euthymius* certainly shared a source, evidently Nicetas the Paphlagonian's *Secret History*. (See pp. 138–41 below.)

[4] Caminiates, chaps. 6.7 and 9.1–3 ("profound peace"), 29.3 (apparent cannon fire), and 45.1 (naked Ethiopians).

[5] Caminiates, chaps. 43.2 (the five lectors), 53 and 54 (their house), and 55.1–7 (the interrogation by the Arabs). Though one may conceivably think that the Arab was unfamiliar with Byzantine offices, Caminiates gives no hint that this was so, and it would not explain the other discrepancies.

Caminiates knew John the Lector's recent account of the fall of Thessalonica to the Turks in 1430, which inspired him to fabricate a comparable account of the city's fall to the Arabs in 904. In fact, the fifteenth-century John the Lector is himself the most likely candidate to have composed the work attributed to Caminiates. The two texts appear together in our oldest manuscript of both of them, which is dated to 1439. While the case that the work of Caminiates is a forgery may not be absolutely conclusive, it seems strong enough that we need not trouble ourselves to explain why this fanciful memoir is so unlike any history that was certainly composed in the ninth or tenth century.

Among authentic histories, around 900 an otherwise unknown Peter of Alexandria wrote a short chronicle entitled *Brief Survey of the Times from Adam to the Present*.[6] It concludes with the reign of Leo VI, but, after recording the co-rulers and lengths of reigns of previous emperors, it fails to mention either Leo's son Constantine VII or the length of Leo's reign. Peter seems therefore to have composed his *Brief Survey* between Leo's accession, in 886, and Constantine's coronation, in 908. In his title Peter describes himself as "Christian and orthodox, of Alexandria," without mentioning his profession or any rank in the Church or bureaucracy. He was a Chalcedonian iconophile, because he calls Michael III and Theodora orthodox. Yet if Peter had been writing for the few Greek readers in Alexandria's small and isolated Melkite community, he would scarcely have needed to describe himself as "of Alexandria" and would probably have written in Arabic and concentrated on Egypt.[7] Especially because he seems to have been well informed about Byzantine history up to 886, Peter was probably a young man who left his home for Constantinople to seek his fortune by writing history, just as George Syncellus had come from Palestine and Theognostus the Grammarian had probably come from Sicily. Whether Peter was rewarded for his work in some way we cannot say.

Peter's text fills thirty-one and a half pages in our sole remaining manuscript. More than half, about sixteen pages, deals with the time of the Book of Genesis, of which about six and a half pages list the peoples descended from the three sons of Noah. Peter covers the rest of the time up to Augustus in about seven pages, the Roman empire up to Diocletian in about three and a half pages, and the Byzantine empire from Constantine I to Leo VI in about five pages. Consisting largely of tables, the *Brief Survey* differs somewhat from other Greek histories that survive today. Besides the Bible, Peter cites Aristobulus of Cassandria, Josephus, Julius Africanus, Eusebius of Caesarea, Socrates of Constantinople, and Evagrius; but, as often happens in Byzantine chronicles, these citations may be borrowed, and in the case of the long-lost works of Aristobulus and Africanus they doubtless

[6] See Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, p. 360, Kazhdan et al., *ODB* III, p. 1638, Samodurova, "Хроника" (with the Greek text), and *PmbZ* I, *Prolegomena*, pp. 26–27.

[7] For example, Eutychius, Melkite patriarch of Alexandria (933–40), wrote a chronicle in Arabic around 937 that deals largely with the Egyptian Church; see Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* II.2, p. 24.

are.[8] Here Peter, like George Syncellus and George the Monk, seems to have made direct or indirect use of the lost chronicle of Panodorus of Alexandria, because Peter adopts Panodorus' date of 5493 B.C. for the Creation instead of the more common date of Annianus.[9] Although Peter appears not to have used the chronicles of George Syncellus and Theophanes, he does seem to have used Nicephorus' *Concise Chronography*, probably in one of its later versions.[10]

Peter consulted at least one more source, however, apart from contemporaries he met at Constantinople. Unlike other known Greek chroniclers, he records not just how many years each emperor reigned but how many times each one assumed the consulship. Like Peter's lengths of imperial reigns, his numbers of imperial consulships are often wrong but not so inaccurate that he could simply have made them up. Since the "Paschal Chronicle" records consuls' names, it could have been used to compute the numbers of the emperors' consulships until its original ending date of 630; but it seems not to have been Peter's source, because its errors differ from his.[11] Peter appears to be our only source for the numbers of imperial consulships from 630 to 886, which he presumably took from official records, since he would hardly have risked the scorn of informed contemporaries by making needless fabrications. Perhaps he became interested in the consulship when Leo VI abolished it, sometime before 899.[12] Though a minor work, Peter's *Brief Survey* preserves unique evidence for imperial consulships, and probably some unique material from the lost chronicle of Panodorus, apparently still to be found at Constantinople in Peter's time.

The turn of the ninth century seems also to be the approximate date of the "Chronicle of Monemvasia," which has been plausibly attributed to the prominent scholar Arethas of Patras.[13] Born around 849 at Patras, in the Peloponnesus, Arethas made his career in Constantinople and probably received his excellent

[8] Peter of Alexandria 192.27 (Aristobulus and Josephus), 194.47–48 (Africanus and Eusebius), and 195.2–3 (Socrates and Evagrius).

[9] Note that Peter of Alexandria p. 195.38–40 reckons the fifteenth year of Anastasius I (which began on April 11, 506) as A.M. 5999, the last year of the sixth millennium, agreeing with Panodorus but not with Annianus; for formulas to convert Panodorus' and Annianus' dates, see Grumel, *Chronologie*, p. 97.

[10] Cf., e.g., Peter of Alexandria, p. 196.21–28, with Nicephorus, *Concise Chronography* 99.1–11.

[11] If we compare Peter's numbers of consulships for the seventeen Byzantine emperors from Constantine I to Justin I with those in the *PLRE*, we find that Peter is correct for eight emperors (Jovian, Valens, Gratian, Marcian, Leo I, Leo II, Anastasius I, and Justin I) and would be correct for three more if we make some fairly easy emendations (Constantine I, reading η' for ιη', Constantius II, reading ι' for ια', and Arcadius, reading ς' for ζ'); but none of Peter's errors is shared with the "Paschal Chronicle." The evidence for imperial consulships after Justinian I is exiguous; see Stein, "Post-consulat."

[12] Leo VI, *Novel* 94 (addressed to Stylianus Zaützes, who died in 899).

[13] On the chronicle, see Lemerle, "Chronique," Dujčev, *Cronaca*, and *PmbZ* I, *Prolegomena* p. 29. For the attribution to Arethas, see Koder, "Arethas." Otherwise on Arethas, see Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, pp. 237–80, Wilson, *Scholars*, pp. 120–35, and Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 75–84 (expressing agnosticism on p. 77 about Arethas' authorship of the chronicle), and for Arethas' political role Jenkins, *Byzantium*, pp. 212–26, and

secondary education there.[14] He was wealthy enough to collect books, which were very expensive. He wrote poems about Photius, expressed admiration for him, and made use of his *Bibliotheca*. Arethas was only about nine years old when Photius first became patriarch, in 858, and Photius can hardly have taught anyone during his first patriarchate or first exile. Yet he is known to have taught the imperial princes between his rehabilitation, around 872, and his second accession to the patriarchate, in 877. Arethas was then in his twenties and may well have had the deposed patriarch as a mentor, not least because the two shared an unusual interest in ancient literature. Around 877 Arethas seems to have opened a school of his own, because without holding an appointment in a state institution he had students, one of whom was Nicetas the Paphlagonian, later an historian and the biographer of Patriarch Ignatius.

Serious scholars typically hoped for advancement in either the bureaucracy or the Church. Around 890, having still not obtained a government office by the age of forty, Arethas had himself ordained a deacon. In 900 he was accused of atheism, probably because of his knowledge of classical philosophy, and was tried and acquitted by a court that included two future patriarchs of Constantinople, Nicholas Mysticus (901–7 and 912–25) and Euthymius (907–12). After Nicholas became patriarch, Arethas obtained the prestigious archbishopric of Caesarea in Cappadocia, though he still spent much of his time in the capital. There he became passionately involved in the controversy over the emperor Leo VI's fourth marriage, in 906. At first Arethas denounced the marriage, because fourth marriages violated both canon and civil law; but after Leo obtained dispensations from both the pope and the new patriarch Euthymius in 907, Arethas not only accepted but defended the marriage. He seems to have stayed out of trouble until 922, when he was accused of plotting against the emperor Romanus I Lecapenus but defended himself successfully. Arethas died after 932, as we shall soon see.

The text conventionally called the "Chronicle of Monemvasia," whose manuscripts give it no title or author, is a compilation of just under a thousand words. It begins by recording the first appearance of the Avars, under Justinian I, their occupation of Thrace and Macedonia, and their invasion of the Peloponnesus. When most of the original Peloponnesians fled, the people of Patras took refuge at Rhegium in Calabria (modern Reggio di Calabria), and others went to other places, including Monemvasia. The Avars occupied the western part of the Peloponnesus for 218 years, until the Byzantine general Sclerus conquered it in 804/5 from the Slavs (not the Avars, whose disappearance the chronicle fails to explain). The

Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 200–207. Kougeas, Καισαρείας Ἀρέθας, has become outdated without quite having been superseded.

[14] Kazhdan, *History* II, p. 75 and n. 59, expresses doubts about the date of Arethas' *Apologetic*, in which the author says he was seventy-three years old; Kazhdan notes that Beck, *Kirche*, p. 591 and n. 3, thought Arethas was still alive after 944, when he supposedly wrote a letter to Constantine VII. Yet Jenkins, "Date," argues convincingly for dating the *Apologetic* to 922, while Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, p. 240 n. 9, believes that the anonymous letter on which Beck relied is probably not by Arethas.

emperor Nicephorus I resettled the new territory, rebuilt its churches, and brought back to Patras the descendants of its original citizens, giving its bishop Athanasius the rank of metropolitan. Nicephorus placed under the metropolitan of Patras the churches of the other cities refounded in the Peloponnesus. The chronicle ends with the conversion of the Slavs "to the glory and praise of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and forever, and unto the ages of the ages, Amen," as if the work were a saint's life.

The information on the Avar invasion in the earlier part of the chronicle comes from Theophanes Confessor, Evagrius Scholasticus, and Theophylact Simocatta. The source of the information on the Byzantine reconquest in the latter part of the chronicle has not been preserved but may well be a lost part of the history of Sergius Confessor.[15] The chronicle is evidently the main source of a long marginal note added in Arethas' own hand to a manuscript of Nicephorus' *Concise Chronography*, which was copied for Arethas in 932. This note, written when he was about eighty-three, is our latest evidence that Arethas was alive. It concerns "Patras of Peloponnesus, my home town," its conquest by the Slavs, its reconquest under the emperor Nicephorus, and its elevation to a metropolitan bishopric. The note also adds a few facts not in our text of the chronicle, though these may possibly have appeared in a fuller text of it. Arethas gives no source for his note, though he mentions sources for most of his other marginal notes in manuscripts.

We have good reasons to think that Arethas wrote not just this note but the chronicle itself.[16] The author of the chronicle was plainly a scholar and cleric with a special interest in the Church of Patras and access to several rare books relevant to his subject: the histories of Theophanes, Evagrius, Theophylact, and either Sergius Confessor or an even more obscure author. Arethas must have been one of very few men who fit this description. The style of the chronicle, which is erudite without being elegant, resembles that of Arethas' known works. Moreover, if the rare history of Photius' father, Sergius, really was a source of the chronicle, the chronicler's knowledge of Sergius also points to Arethas, an admirer and perhaps a student of Photius and an early reader of Photius' *Bibliotheca*. The precise date of the chronicle is hard to determine, because the marginal note shows that Arethas remained interested in his birthplace throughout his long life. He may, however, have been most inclined to write about the bishopric of Patras after he entered the Church, around 890, but before he became metropolitan of Caesarea, around 902. Though the "Chronicle of Monemvasia" is a minor work, it has some historical value.

The History of Basil I and Leo VI

Apparently around 913, an unknown author composed a lost history that served as a direct source for the chronicle of Symeon the Logothete and probably as an

[15] See above, pp. 97–98.
[16] See Koder, "Arethas."

indirect source for several other works. The hallmark of this lost history was its composition in entries arranged in accurate, though modified, chronological order. While the main event of each entry followed the previous entry and preceded the following entry, some entries included digressions on related events that occurred earlier or later than the main event. The contents of this lost chronicle can be traced in Symeon the Logothete's generally reliable chronology for the reigns of Basil I (867–86) and Leo VI (886–912). For this period the lost chronicle, which we may call the History of Basil and Leo, was evidently the only source Symeon used. The concluding date of the lost chronicle can be fixed at 912, because Symeon's chronology is evidently inaccurate for the short reign of Alexander (912–13) and for several events in the rest of the first edition of Symeon's chronicle before it concludes with 948.[17]

That the lost source included the year 867 need not mean that it began with that date. Although Symeon makes some glaring chronological errors in recording the reign of Michael III (842–67), these mistakes seem to have resulted from his clumsily combining other material with his chronologically accurate source, which for this period dealt chiefly with the rise of Basil I. Symeon apparently found material elsewhere for six short chapters on important events that his main source omitted: the patriarchates of Ignatius and Photius, the conversion of the Bulgars, and a raid by the Rus'. If these entries are excluded, the remainder of Symeon's account of Michael III's reign appears to be in correct chronological order. Nonetheless, neither Symeon's principal source nor his additional source (or sources) seems to have included absolute dates, so that Symeon had to combine his material from these sources as best he could, muddling his chronology in the process. Evidently Symeon's main source, though quite possibly based on annals, included no exact dates in most of its entries.

As we have seen, the first few chapters of Symeon's account of the reign of Michael III derive from the Continuation of Theophanes from 829 to 844, which ended with Theoctistus' building himself a mansion near the imperial palace, around 844.[18] The next event that Symeon mentions, the marriage of Michael III to Eudocia Decapolitissa, in 855, is probably Symeon's first entry from the lost History of Basil and Leo. This marriage, forced on Michael by Theodora and Theoctistus in an attempt to separate the young emperor from his mistress Eudocia Ingerina, began the chain of events that caused the fall of Theoctistus and the rise of Basil the Macedonian, later Basil I, and was therefore needed background for a history of that emperor. In the next entry Symeon reports

[17] On this text, see Jenkins, "Chronological Accuracy," though on pp. 111–12 he suggests with some hesitation that this "annalistic source" included the reign of Alexander; see Karlin-Hayter, "Emperor Alexander's Bad Name," for a plausible argument that Symeon's account of Alexander's reign is "a medley of a dozen or so anecdotes thrown together several reigns and *coups-d'état* later." Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 11–62, however, acknowledges that before 912 Symeon and the *Life of Euthymius* shared an "annalistic source." Further on Symeon's use of this chronicle, see pp. 209–10 below.

[18] See above, pp. 111–13.

that "a little later" than Michael's marriage, apparently still in 855, Basil won Michael's favor by taming a spirited horse, and was consequently made an imperial groom.[19] In Symeon's text this incident introduces a long digression on Basil's career, beginning with his birth in Thrace in 811 and his captivity in Bulgaria from 813 to 836 and ending with Theodora's warning to Michael in 855 that Basil would destroy the Amorian dynasty.[20] Since this digression includes prophecies that Basil would kill Michael and become emperor, it was evidently composed as a prelude to an account of Basil's reign. Thus far Symeon seems to relate events in correct chronological sequence, if we allow for the well-signaled digression on Basil's earlier life.

After this point, in 855, Symeon seems to have begun to combine different sources. His next two entries are out of sequence and seem to come from a supplementary source or sources; they concern the death of Patriarch Methodius and the consecration of Patriarch Ignatius in 847 and an abortive invasion by the Bulgars, sometime between 846 and 855.[21] Next Symeon, returning to 855, apparently summarizes from his main source the assassination of Theoctistus, later that year, Michael's relegation of his mother and sisters to convents, around 857, Basil's promotion to protostrator (chief imperial groom), around 858, Bardas' promotion to Caesar, in 862, and a raid as far as Sinope by the emir of Melitene ʿUmar, apparently in the summer of 863.[22] Then Symeon evidently reverts to a supplementary source, describing another war with the Bulgars that led to their conversion in 865; in the supplementary source, this event may immediately have

[19] Symeon I, 131.6 (Michael's marriage) and 7 (Basil's taming the horse). Although *Theophanes Continuatus* V.12–13 dates the latter incident after Basil won a wrestling match at a banquet hosted by Bardas' son Antigonus, this banquet can scarcely be historical (cf. *PmbZ* I, nos. 11861 and 12073), especially because Antigonus was born only in 853/54 (*PmbZ* I, no. 503).

[20] Symeon I, 131.8–16. At Symeon I, 131.11, the statement that the Bulgar ruler in 836 was "Vladimir, grandson of Krum, father of Symeon," was probably altered by Symeon from his source's "Malamir, grandson of Krum" (which would be correct; cf. *PmbZ* I, no. 4681), since an historian writing as early as 912 is unlikely to have confused Malamir with Vladimir, father of the reigning Bulgar ruler, Symeon. That Basil was twenty-five in 836 indicates that he was born in 811. (Cf. Treadgold, "Bulgars' Treaty," especially p. 220.)

[21] Symeon I, 131.17–18. This war cannot have been later than 855, because Theodora was still ruling at the time, and it presumably happened after the peace treaty with the Bulgars expired, in 846. (See Treadgold, "Bulgars' Treaty.")

[22] Symeon I, 131.19–24. Note that Symeon I, 131.19, anachronistically calls Bardas "Caesar," though Symeon I, 131.23, mentions Bardas' promotion to Caesar in its proper place. For the dates, see *PmbZ* I, nos. 8050 (assassination of Theoctistus), 7286 (relegation of Theodora), 12085 (Basil's promotion to protostrator), and 791 (Bardas' promotion to Caesar). The date of the raid by ʿUmar as far as Sinope (Symeon I, 131.24) is somewhat problematic. Though Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* I, p. 249 n. 3, assume that it is unrecorded elsewhere and date it hesitantly to 860–61, it seems much more likely to be identical with the raid on Amisus (which was on the way to Sinope from the caliphate), dated by Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* to 863 (Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* I, pp. 249–51), the date given by Wahlgren in his apparatus to Symeon I, 131.24.

followed the entry on the earlier war with the Bulgars.[23] Next Symeon returns to his main source's interrupted account of the raid of ʿUmar of Melitene in 863 and records its sequel, ʿUmar's defeat and death on September 4 of that year.[24]

After an entry ridiculing Michael's construction of extravagant stables that presumably derives from the main source and belongs between 863 and 865, Symeon evidently used his supplementary source or sources for three more entries, which again are out of chronological order. These record the deposition of Patriarch Ignatius, in 858, and his replacement by Photius (who is described as "extremely learned"), a sea raid on Constantinople by the Rus' in 860, and the destruction of the Russian raiders in a storm after Photius dipped a garment of the Virgin in the sea to ward them off.[25] After this, Symeon's remaining twenty-four entries on Michael III all in one way or another concern the rise of Basil I, from his appointment as imperial chamberlain, probably in 865, to his murder of Michael and accession as sole emperor in 867.[26] These entries appear to be in the right chronological order and to derive from Symeon's main source.[27]

All that Symeon appears to have taken from his supplementary source or sources was about a page of information on the succession of patriarchs of Constantinople, the conversion of the Bulgars, and the miraculous defeat of the Rus'. Symeon may, of course, have taken this information from more than one supplementary source, although he generally seems to have used as few sources as he could. If he used only one supplementary source, it was presumably a history that was neither very early nor particularly accurate, because it seems to have put the conversion of the Bulgars, in 865, before Photius became patriarch, in 858. We shall see that this source could be the lost history of Manuel the Protospatharius, which was probably written around 962, covered the years from 813 to 948, and was used by Symeon for a later part of his history.[28] In any case, Symeon made much less use of his supplementary source or sources than of his main source.

Symeon's main source for the years from 855 to 912, the History of Basil and Leo, was an important and interesting historical work. While it dealt chiefly with the reigns of Basil I and Leo VI, it also recorded the rise of Basil under Michael III in circumstantial detail, beginning in 855 with Theodora's attempt to separate Michael from his mistress Eudocia Ingerina by a forced marriage to another woman. The original account showed how Michael arranged a marriage of convenience between his mistress Eudocia and Basil soon before the birth of her son Leo VI, who was actually Michael's son. Basil was, however, the father of

[23] Symeon I, 131.25; cf. Symeon I, 131.18.

[24] Symeon I, 131.26; see Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* I, pp. 251–56.

[25] Symeon I, 131.27 (Michael's stable), 28 (deposition of Ignatius), 29 and 30 (raid of the Rus'); on the latter two chapters, see Mango, *Homilies*, pp. 74–82.

[26] Symeon I, 131.31–54. The probable dates appear in Wahlgren's apparatus.

[27] Presumably the references at Symeon I, 132.7, 132.23, and 133.62, to the later emperor Romanus I and at Symeon I, 133.10, to the reign of Constantine VII and Zoë are additions by Symeon himself, though the events to which they are appended seem to have been recorded in Symeon's main source in their proper places.

[28] See below, pp. 197–203.

Alexander, who was born to Eudocia three years after Michael's death. In all this the History of Basil and Leo was presumably correct, to judge from the hostile relations between Basil and Leo and from Leo's prompt and respectful reburial of Michael's body as soon as Leo became emperor. While the fact that Leo was Michael's illegitimate son was problematic for Leo, it was not a problem for Basil's real son, Alexander, under whom Symeon's source probably wrote.[29] Nor did Symeon, probably writing under the nondynastic emperor Nicephorus II, need to suppress information that reflected badly on Leo.

The History of Basil and Leo seems to have been quite evenhanded in its treatment of Michael III, Basil I, Leo VI, and Photius, each of whom doubtless had his faults. With dispassionate cynicism, the author depicted all three as morally tainted, capable of occasional good deeds but often misled by self-serving advisers. Thus the historian recorded that Michael was a frivolous playboy who ordered the brutal murder of his mother's adviser Theoctistus, but also that during Michael's reign Anatolia enjoyed "great calm" after the defeat and death of ʿUmar of Melitene. The historian recorded a "divine voice" that predicted Basil's accession, but also Theodora's warning to her son that Basil was "destined to destroy our dynasty." The author reported that Bardas had conspired to kill Basil before Basil conspired to kill him, and that Basil killed Michael only after Michael had humiliated him and plotted against him. Yet the same historian also declared that those who had helped Basil kill Michael were soon struck down by "vengeance coming from God."[30]

According to the same history, when Basil was sole emperor he laudably baptized the empire's Jews and won major victories over the Arabs; but he also despoiled churches to build his own New Church, and was duly bitten on the finger by a bronze snake on a plundered statue. The author assigned most blame for the enmity between Basil and Leo to the monk Theodore Santabarenus, who supposedly advised Leo to carry a knife and then accused him of planning to kill Basil with it. The writer recorded both that Photius introduced the wicked

[29] Symeon I, 131.6 (Michael's forced marriage), 131.32 (Basil's marriage to Eudocia), 131.45 (the birth of Leo), 132.6 (the birth of Alexander), 132.24 (Basil's wish to blind Leo), and 133.2 (Leo's reburial of Michael). For these apparent facts, see Mango, "Eudocia" (by no means refuted by the skepticism of Tougher, *Reign*, pp. 42–67). As for the parentage of Basil's eldest son, Constantine, Basil's great love for him indicates that he was Basil's son by his divorced first wife, Maria, and Symeon's account seems to leave too little time for Constantine to be born between Basil's divorce and remarriage (soon before Bardas' murder, on March 25, 866) and Leo's birth (September 866). The most likely explanation is that the original source of Symeon I, 132.18.108–9, read Κωνσταντῖνος υἱὸς Βασιλείου, and that the words υἱὸς Μιχαὴλ βασιλέως ἐξ Εὐδοκίας, ὡς δὲ λόγος, were added by Symeon, who had become understandably confused by Basil's complex marital history. Note that Symeon I, 132.21, simply refers to Constantine as Basil's son, and that both chapters describe Basil as prostrated by Constantine's death.

[30] Symeon I, 131.6 (Michael's frivolity), 131.14 (the divine prediction), 131.16 (Theodora's prediction), 131.26 ("great calm" in Anatolia), 131.31 and 33 (Bardas' plotting against Basil), 131.46 (Michael's humiliation of Basil), 131.47 (Michael's plot against Basil), and 132.2 (the fates of Basil's co-conspirators).

Santabarenus to Basil and that Photius dissuaded Basil from blinding Leo.[31] The historian also told the story of the alleged hunting accident in which Basil was carried off by his belt on the antlers of a giant stag, cut loose by a man he accused of trying to kill him, and fatally injured. Though modern observers may well suspect that Basil was murdered by a partisan of Leo's, the historian seems to have believed this tale, which was the official version and no less credible than Basil's being bitten by a bronze snake.[32]

As for Leo VI's own reign, the History of Basil and Leo recorded that Leo "splendidly" restored the Church of St. Thomas, built a "very beautiful" church in honor of his late wife, St. Theophano, and appointed the "venerable, ascetic, and very pious" Euthymius as patriarch of Constantinople. Yet the same history implied Leo's complicity in the poisoning of the husband of his mistress Zoë Zaützina, and in the corrupt practices of Zoë's family and their confederates, which caused a ruinous war with Bulgaria. The history also referred to the chamberlain Samonas as "the emperor's accomplice in every crime and wickedness." On the other hand, the same history says that Leo later punished the corrupt officials responsible for the Bulgarian war, and finally relegated the evil Samonas to a monastery.[33]

The author of the History of Basil and Leo seems to have been remarkably well informed about the emperors and their courtiers. He had heard mostly reliable reports that went back to the time of Basil I's birth, around 811. He had confidential information not only about the plots and counterplots of Basil and Bardas but about the assassinations of Theoctistus, Bardas, and Michael, and the three failed conspiracies against Leo VI. The author also knew intimate details not just of the marriages of Michael and Basil but of the love affairs of Michael III's sister Thecla and of Basil's empress, Eudocia. The writer knew that Leo and his then-mistress, Zoë Carbonopsina ("Coal Eyes"), were scandalously sharing a bed in the Monastery of St. Mocius at the time of the attempt on Leo's life. The historian showed extensive knowledge of the machinations of Samonas, including his slander that Zoë Carbonopsina and her servant Constantine were lovers.[34]

[31] Symeon I, 132.10 (Basil baptizes Jews), 132.14 (Basil plunders churches), 132.15 (Basil raids Arab Melitene), 132.17 (Basil sacks Arab Germanicea), 132.21 (Photius commends Santabarenus to Basil), 132.23 (Santabarenus slanders Leo), and 132.24 (Photius intercedes for Leo).

[32] Cf. Symeon I, 132.27. (Cf. *Life of Euthymius* chap. 1, which apparently made indirect use of the History of Basil and Leo; see below, pp. 133–34 and 138–39.)

[33] Symeon I, 133.5 (Church of St. Thomas), 133.13 (the poisoning of Zoë's husband), 133.24 (the punishment of the corrupt Musicus and Stauracius; cf. 133.15), 133.33 (the Church of St. Theophano), 133.50 (the wickedness of Samonas and holiness of Euthymius), and 133.61 (the fall of Samonas).

[34] Symeon I, 131.8 (Basil's birth), 131.19–20 (Theoctistus' assassination), 131.33–38 (Bardas' assassination), 131.48–54 (Michael's assassination), 132.9 (Thecla's affair; cf. 131.32), 132.13 (Eudocia's affair), 133.22 (the failed plot of the Zaützes family), 133.25–28 (the failed plot of Basil the Epeictes; cf. *Life of Euthymius* chap. 8), 133.36–38 (the failed assassination attempt in the Church of St. Mocius; cf. *Life of Euthymius* chap. 11), and 133.60 (the alleged affair of Constantine and Zoë). On the plots against Leo, see Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 14–16, 28, 170–71, 176–77, and 189.

Even Symeon's abridged version provides some clues to the sort of person this historian was. Because he seems to have written around 913 and to have had personal knowledge of the court that went back to 855, we may guess that he was born around 840 and wrote as an elderly man. He respected learning, and he praised as "most learned" the former postal logothete John Hagiopolites and Mark the Oikonomos of St. Sophia, both of whom served Leo VI and were presumably the historian's friends and sources. Another source seems to have been Thomas Genesius the Patrician, who informed the historian about Thomas' father, Constantine, a high official under Michael III.[35] The historian was more interested in politics than in church affairs, because he appears to have said next to nothing about the patriarchates of Ignatius and Photius under Michael III, even though their activities were related to his main subject, the rise of Basil I. The abundant details of the emperors' private lives in the history suggest that the historian was a palace official, perhaps a palace eunuch.

Although the history dealt chiefly with Basil I and Leo VI, its treatment of Basil's rise under Michael III was so thorough that the work may actually have formed a sort of sequel to Symeon's earlier source, the Continuation of Theophanes from 829 to 844, which was probably also written by a courtier. Yet neither of these works found much of an audience. The only readers we know of the History of Basil and Leo are Symeon, who finished the first edition of his chronicle around 968, and probably Nicetas the Paphlagonian, writing around 921.[36] Both evidently wrote when the senior emperors were not members of the Macedonian dynasty, which traced its descent from Basil and Leo. After the Macedonian dynasty regained its power, pro-Macedonian historians would not have wanted to copy such a detailed and unflattering account of the dynasty's first two rulers without some editing.

Nevertheless, the pro-Macedonian *Life of Basil* and *Life of Euthymius*, and the fourth books of both Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus*, apparently include a good deal of information from the History of Basil and Leo, though their authors omit any details unfavorable to those two emperors. Since the *Life of Basil*, Genesius, and Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus* evidently have no passages in common with Symeon except those related to Basil, we can rule out the possibility that Symeon consulted one of these three pro-Macedonian histories or that the three shared with Symeon a source for events earlier than Basil's rise. None of the three pro-Macedonian histories includes the reign of Leo VI, leaving us nothing to compare with that part of Symeon's chronicle; but the *Life of Euthymius*, which deals mainly with Leo's reign, cannot have used Symeon, the *Life of Basil*, Genesius, or *Theophanes Continuatus*, because the *Life of Euthymius* was written

[35] Symeon I, 133.3 (John Hagiopolites) and 133.38 (Mark). On Thomas the Patrician, see below, pp. 182–84. Bury, *History*, pp. 458–59, notes that Symeon I, 131.50, gives an unexpected prominence to Basil the Rector, the son of one of the murderers of Michael III; this Basil may have been another friend and source of the author of the History of Basil and Leo.

[36] See below, pp. 148–49.

well before any of them.[37] Yet Symeon and the three pro-Macedonian historians describe a number of the events of Basil's life in terms similar enough to indicate a common source, and the *Life of Euthymius* has descriptions of several events from Leo's reign that similarly resemble Symeon's account.

For example, Symeon, the *Life of Basil*, and Genesius all relate that, when the impoverished Basil first came to Constantinople and fell asleep outside the Monastery of St. Diomedes, a monk admitted him after having three dreams in which St. Diomedes insisted that Basil be welcomed as a future emperor. Symeon says that a monk named Nicholas had the dreams, brought Basil into the monastery, and then had Basil recommended to a nobleman named Theophilitzes, the employer of the monk's brother, who later introduced Basil to the emperor Michael. The *Life of Basil* says that the abbot of St. Diomedes had these three dreams, invited Basil in, and recommended him to Theophilitzes. Genesius observes that his sources disagreed as to whether the one who had the dreams, admitted Basil, and recommended him to "Theophiliscus" was "some monk" of St. Diomedes (as in Symeon) or its abbot (as in the *Life of Basil*). Here Symeon seems to have copied the original story from the History of Basil and Leo, the *Life of Basil* seems to have improved upon the story by having Basil honored by the abbot and not a lower-ranking monk, and Genesius seems to repeat both the original version and its revision in the *Life of Basil*.[38]

In another example, Symeon, the *Life of Basil*, and Genesius all report that when the empress Theodora first saw Basil, she warned her son, Michael III, that this man would destroy their dynasty, although Michael ignored her warning.[39] Symeon, the *Life of Basil*, and Book IV of *Theophanes Continuatus* also record that Leo the Philosopher warned the Caesar Bardas against Basil.[40] Symeon's text seems to show further parallels with the *Life of Basil* and Genesius for the events of Basil's reign, though since these parallels concern material that is clearly historical and could have been widely known, they are somewhat less conclusive than those prophesying about Basil.[41] Later, however, Symeon's accounts of Santabarenus' plot against Leo and of Basil's supposed hunting accident are close enough to those in the *Life of Basil*, and show such intimate knowledge of the imperial court, that they all clearly seem to derive from the History of Basil and Leo.[42]

The *Life of Euthymius*, though missing its beginning, end, and parts of its middle, shows clear verbal parallels with Symeon's chronicle in three passages. One is

[37] See below, p. 138 and n. 54.

[38] Symeon I, 131.13–15 (cf. Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 655.19–657.1), *Life of Basil* 9, and Genesius IV.24–26. The author of the *Life of Basil* must have seen and rejected Nicetas the Paphlagonian's version of this incident, even if he found the story already altered in the encomium of Basil that he also used. (See below, p. 170.)

[39] Symeon I, 131.16, *Life of Basil* 15, and Genesius IV.26.

[40] Symeon I, 131.34, *Life of Basil* 14, and *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.34.

[41] See below, p. 168.

[42] Symeon I, 132.23 and 132.27 (cf. *Life of Euthymius* 3–5.32), and *Life of Basil* 100 and 102 (cf. Genesius IV.42).

again Basil's hunting accident, the first incident in the preserved part of the biography; the others are the attempt to assassinate Leo in the Church of St. Mocius in 903, and the deposition of the patriarch Nicholas Mysticus in 907.[43] The *Life of Euthymius* was, however, written by a contemporary who must have used several sources, some of them probably oral. In the *Life of Euthymius*, the account of Basil's accident is about five times as long as the corresponding part of Symeon's history; the account of the assassination attempt on Leo is only a little shorter than in Symeon; and the account of Nicholas' deposition is more than six times as long as Symeon's. The additional material either belonged to the full text of the History of Basil and Leo, or was added to it by the author of the *Life of Euthymius*, or was added by an intermediate source that used the History of Basil and Leo and was then copied by the author of the *Life of Euthymius*. All three possibilities are compatible with these historians' having used an intermediate source for the History of Basil and Leo.

On the whole, the *Life of Euthymius*, the *Life of Basil*, and the fourth books of Genesius and of *Theophanes Continuatus*, though generally more detailed than Symeon's chronicle, evidently used less material from the History of Basil and Leo than Symeon did. They also combined whatever material they did use with information from another source or sources, in the process scrambling the original chronological order of the History of Basil and Leo. Moreover, the *Life of Euthymius*, the *Life of Basil*, Genesius, and *Theophanes Continuatus* often transmit versions of material from the History of Basil and Leo that are adapted and mixed with other material in ways that resemble each other but differ from Symeon. Therefore these three pro-Macedonian histories and the *Life of Euthymius* seem to have used not the History of Basil and Leo itself but another source that used that history. This source was probably the *Secret History* of Nicetas the Paphlagonian, to which we shall now turn.

Nicetas the Paphlagonian and the "secular and sacred history"

A fourteenth-century manuscript containing the church histories of Sozomen and Evagrius and excerpts from some other works also describes a lost history that was apparently composed around 921. This manuscript includes three such book reviews that were inserted not by the main scribe but by someone else who wrote on a page and a half that the main scribe had left blank. The anonymous reviewer first copied from Photius' *Bibliotheca* Photius' descriptions of the sixth-century church histories of John Diacrinomenus and Basil the Cilician, both now lost. Then, evidently taking Photius as his model, the reviewer added his own

[43] On the MS of the *Life of Euthymius*, which is now lost, see Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 5–6. The parallels are at *Life of Euthymius*, chap. 1, pp. 3.2–5.21 (Symeon I, 132.27; cf. Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 12–13), chap. 11, pp. 67.1–30 (Symeon I, 133.36–38; cf. Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 14–16), and chap. 13, pp. 83.22–89.2 (Symeon I, 133.50; cf. Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 16–17).

description of a later history that he had read himself, though only in part.[44] The reviewer seems to have been unaware of the historian's name but to have deduced from the history's contents that its author had lived under Basil I and Leo VI and survived until the accession of Romanus I, which occurred in December 920. The reviewer continues, "[The historian] also composed many other books, but later, having become, as he says, very old, residing in Heraclea Pontica, he composed two books including secular and sacred history roughly from the beginning of the world until himself."

Apparently these two books were long, because each of them contained a thousand chapters and was bound as a separate volume. Book I covered the period from the Creation to the Incarnation, while Book II covered the years from the Incarnation to "the whole reign of Constantine [VII] Porphyrogenitus." Since the elderly historian, writing under Romanus I (920–44), could not have known that Constantine would reign a second time as senior emperor after 944, the "whole reign" of Constantine presumably meant Constantine's whole first reign, from 913 to 920. Because the historian wrote about events "until himself," he seems to have finished his history soon after December 920, perhaps as early as 921. The reviewer had been unable to find Book I, which he assumed had been lost over the course of time, and he may not have known the historian's name because it had appeared at the beginning of Book I without being repeated in Book II. Probably for the same reason, the reviewer seems not even to have known the author's title for the "secular and sacred history," which seems to be not a title but a description. The historian must, however, have mentioned in a separate preface or postscript to Book II that he had written many other works, was old, and lived in Heraclea.

The reviewer describes and criticizes the contents of Book II on the basis of his own reading. He says that Book II began by summarizing the Gospels in a hundred chapters, then epitomized the Acts of the Apostles and the church histories of Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Evagrius. When Evagrius left off in the middle of the reign of Maurice (582–602), the historian added his own account up to his own times. Yet according to the reviewer, after summarizing Evagrius, the historian:

> describes everything else cursorily and (one might say) superficially, and lavishes most of his narrative on [denouncing] the wickedness of the patriarch Photius. With this idea in mind he approaches every subject right up to [Photius'] death, and abuses the man and describes his monstrously unspeakable deeds at such length that one might suppose [the historian] had undertaken the whole remainder of his work for this very purpose. He is harsh in

[44] For a description of the MS (*Baroccianus graecus* 142), see de Boor, "Zur Kenntnis" and "Zur kirchenhistorischen Litteratur." Here I follow the corrected text of the review of the third book in Winkelmann, "Hat Niketas?" pp. 144–45. See Photius, *Bibliotheca*, codd. 41 and 42, for his reviews of John Diacrinomenus and Basil the Cilician (on both of whom see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 168–69 and 174–75).

> his style, and his language is so far from being [formal] Greek that one might suppose that he is not taking it seriously and is composing his history offhand. However, one might [also] say that he is extremely learned and a consummate expert on Holy Scripture. Having completed his work in a thousand chapters, he concludes by giving the book the additional title *Concerning New Ways of Wisdom*.

The ambiguous language of this apparent subtitle for Book II seems to mean that the author treated history in a manner that his readers would find unfamiliar, especially if they admired Photius.[45]

The anonymous "secular and sacred history" described by this reviewer must be lost today in its original form. However, as we have already seen, the tenth-century chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon includes a rich collection of materials calculated to defame Photius in every possible way. Pseudo-Symeon, who partly abridges the authentic chronicle of Symeon the Logothete, also adds various passages that are not in Symeon's first edition. Three of these added passages are derived from the *Scriptor Incertus* (evidently to be identified with Sergius Confessor), while another passage comes from the lost Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829, and a fifth seems to be a mistaken guess by Pseudo-Symeon himself.[46] Besides these five additions, Pseudo-Symeon adds thirty-eight more passages to Symeon's narrative for the period from 813 to 948. For the years from the beginning of Photius' first patriarchate, in 858, to the end of Photius' second patriarchate, in 886, Pseudo-Symeon adds fifteen passages, of which five, amounting to some two-fifths of the added text, are anti-Photian.[47] Nothing particularly anti-Photian appears in the first edition of Symeon, which as we have seen describes Photius as "extremely learned" and gives him credit for persuading Basil I not to blind Leo VI.[48]

Especially because we know that Pseudo-Symeon took four passages from the *Scriptor Incertus* and the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829 and based another on guesswork, we cannot automatically assume that all thirty-eight of the other passages that he added to the chronicle of Symeon came from a single source. Yet most of these thirty-eight additions share significant features. Twenty-six show clear parallels with Genesius, Books I–IV of *Theophanes*

45 The Greek is περὶ τῶν καινῶν τῆς σοφίας ἐπιτηδευμάτων, which could also mean "Concerning Novel Methods of Learning." Both de Boor and Winkelmann prudently avoid translating it.

46 See above, pp. 94–95 and 111 and n. 111. The passages are Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 603.3–9, 606.11–22, and 612.3–618.19 (from the *Scriptor*), 606.11–609 (from the lost epitome, including some overlapping with the *Scriptor*), and 640.15–16 (probably Pseudo-Symeon's mistaken guess).

47 The passages are Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 659.1–665.2 (partly anti-Photian), 665.18–21, 667.13–673.12 (mostly anti-Photian), 677.5–678.6, 681.19–682.18, 683.10–16, 683.20–684.7, 686.12–687.5, 687.7–15, 689.5–690.3 (all anti-Photian), 690.17–691.7, 693.14–694.13 (all anti-Photian), 694.17–697.2, 698.4–699.4, and 699.22–700.5 (all anti-Photian).

48 Symeon I, 131.28 and 132.24.

Continuatus, or the *Life of Basil* that must derive from a common source, because each author includes unique material that obviously belonged to the original account, and Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* omit all the anti-Photian references. One of these passages also shows parallels to another work composed in the circle of Constantine VII, now conventionally called *De Administrando Imperio* ("On Administering the Empire"). Three more passages show parallels with the second edition of Symeon's chronicle. Of the nine passages without parallels, two are anti-Photian, which was presumably the reason Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and the *Life of Basil* omitted them. Pseudo-Symeon's thirty-eight additions to Symeon deal with both ecclesiastical and secular history, often in a dogmatic and pedantic manner expressed in awkward Greek. Thirteen of them include prophecies; six of them include poetry; and six of them include learned etymologies of names of people and places. Two more have parallels with such etymologies in Genesius. The last of Pseudo-Symeon's additions to Symeon (before 948, when the first edition of Symeon's chronicle ends) is datable to 919.[49]

Four of these thirty-eight passages in Pseudo-Symeon show parallels to parts of Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* that, if the analysis that has been suggested here is correct, should derive from the lost history of Theognostus the

[49] The full list of the thirty-eight additions I have found is Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 603.6–9 (Genesius I.24, with an etymology), 604.2–606.10 (Genesius I.4, I.13, I.14, *Theophanes Continuatus* I.9, I.11., I.18, with prophecies), 609.22–612.2 (Genesius I.17–18, *Theophanes Continuatus* I.21–23, with prophecies), 618.19–620.6 (Genesius I.19–21, *Theophanes Continuatus* I.24–25, II.1), 620.9–11 (Genesius II.14, *Theophanes Continuatus* II.24), 620.20–621.2 (no parallels), 622.1–624.8 (Genesius II.10–11, *Theophanes Continuatus* II.21–23 and 25–26, with verses), 624.11–12 (*Theophanes Continuatus* II.28), 626.2–627.10 (Genesius III.3, *Theophanes Continuatus* III.19, with an etymology only in Genesius), 628.3–630.10 (Genesius III.20, *Theophanes Continuatus* III.4–6), 635.15–636.7 (Genesius III.15, *Theophanes Continuatus* III.27, with a prophecy), 637.5–10 (Genesius III.5, with etymologies), 639.13–640.2 (no parallels), 641.20–643.8 and 643.12–17 (Theophanes III.14, with verses), 643.18–645.10 (no parallels, but with a prophecy), 646.20–647.2 (Genesius III.7, *Theophanes Continuatus* III.38), 647.18–654.11 (Genesius IV.2–6, *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.2–3, IV.6–7, IV.9–12, with prophecies), 659.1–665.2 (*Theophanes Continuatus* IV.13–14, IV.21, IV.36–39, *Life of Basil* 21–23, 27, 29), 665.18–21 (*Theophanes Continuatus* IV.15), 667.13–673.12 (Genesius IV.18, *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.30–32, with prophecies), 677.3–678.6 (Genesius IV.21–22, *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.34, IV.40, and IV.42, with prophecies), 681.19–682.18 (*Theophanes Continuatus* IV.35), 683.10–16 (*Life of Basil* 25, with verses), 683.20–684.7 (*Life of Basil* 26), 686.12–687.5 (no parallels, but with etymologies), 687.7–15 (no parallels), 689.5–690.3 (Genesius IV.24, *Life of Basil* 1–8, with a prophecy), 690.17–691.7 (*Theophanes Continuatus* I.10, with an etymology), 693.14–694.13 (no parallels, but anti-Photian), 694.17–697.2 (Genesius IV.32, *Life of Basil* 55–58, Constantine, *De Administrando Imperio* 29.119–216 with a prophecy, and with an etymology only in Genesius), 698.4–699.4 (*Life of Basil* 101, with prophecy), and 699.22–700.5 (no parallels, but anti-Photian, and see n. 51 below); in addition, six passages are later than the reign of Basil: Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 705.14–707.10 (Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, 366.11–12 and 367.5–22, with etymologies and verse), 713.13–715.6 (no parallels, but with prophecy), 716.8–14 (Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, 378.10–17), 720.5–16 (Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, 383.16–384.3, with a prophecy), 727.14–18 (no parallels, but with verses and a prophecy), and 728.21–729.19 (no parallels, but with etymologies and verses).

Grammarian. According to that analysis, in these four cases Pseudo-Symeon, Genesius, and *Theophanes Continuatus* summarized a common source that itself summarized not just Theognostus' history but a poem by Theophanes Confessor and Ignatius the Deacon's *Life of Nicephorus*.[50] These four passages in Pseudo-Symeon all have parallels in both Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus*; two of them include prophecies, and one includes verses.[51] These four additions therefore appear to have come from the same source as most, and perhaps all, of the other thirty-four additions that Pseudo-Symeon made to the first edition of Symeon.

The common source of Pseudo-Symeon, Genesius, and *Theophanes Continuatus* appears also to have been consulted by another writer, the anonymous author of the *Life of Euthymius*. The account in the *Life of Euthymius* of the death of Basil I shows unmistakable parallels to Pseudo-Symeon. According to Pseudo-Symeon, Basil's dying words were, "The unholy Photius and his henchman Santabarenus, by separating me from God and making me a stranger to true knowledge, have dragged me down to the same damnation as theirs!" The author of the *Life of Euthymius*, which is not anti-Photian, has Basil leave out the reference to "the unholy Photius" and blame only Santabarenus.[52] Presumably Genesius and the author of *Theophanes Continuatus*, who were not anti-Photian either, simply omitted the whole passage as the easiest way of not besmirching Photius. Yet the original text evidently showed the detestation of Photius that was characteristic of the common source. This appears to be the same common source that is responsible for the pervasive similarities between the histories of Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* and has already been identified as a lost history.[53]

This common source of Pseudo-Symeon, Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and the *Life of Euthymius* must therefore have been composed between 919, the date of Pseudo-Symeon's last borrowing from it, and the date of the *Life of Euthymius*, which was written between 922/23 and 925.[54] Consequently the author of this

[50] See above, p. 85.

[51] These passages are Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 604.2–606.10 (Genesius I.4, I.13, I.14, *Theophanes Continuatus* I.9, I.11, I.18, prophecies), 609.22–612.2 (Genesius I.17–18, *Theophanes Continuatus* I.21–23, prophecies), 618.19–620.6 (Genesius I.19–21, *Theophanes Continuatus* I.24–25, II.1), and 622.1–624.8 (Genesius II.10–11, *Theophanes Continuatus* II.21–23 and 25–26, verses).

[52] Cf. Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 699.22–700.5, with *Life of Euthymius* chap. 1, p. 5.26–32; see also Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 13–14.

[53] See Ljubarskij, "Theophanes Continuatus." Though Signes Codoñer, *Período*, argues that the common source was a hypothetical "dossier" of miscellaneous materials, such "dossiers" seem to be unknown to actual Byzantines, though they have unfortunately become fashionable hypotheses among certain Byzantinists; see above, p. xiii. Note that Lilie, *Byzanz*, pp. 384–408, has refuted Paul Speck's theory of a "dossier" that was a common source of Nicephorus and Theophanes, a theory that seems to have inspired the similar hypothesis of Signes Codoñer.

[54] Though Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 9–10, dates the *Life of Euthymius* between 920 and 925, on pp. 231–32 she acknowledges that it must have been written no earlier than "the tenth year" after 912, when Euthymius (*Life of Euthymius* 21.33–37) prophesied that peace would

common source dealt with the history of both Church and state, completed his work between 919 and 925, displayed a violent hostility to Photius, and affected an awkward and idiosyncratic style and a pedantic manner. Except in the extremely improbable event that two such histories were written, the author of the common source of these four writers is surely to be identified with the historian described in our fourteenth-century review. That historian, according to the reviewer, composed a "secular and sacred history" ending around 920, wrote soon after that date, displayed a violent hostility to Photius, employed an improvised and unpleasant style, but was nevertheless a man of obvious learning.

Can this historian be identified? A plausible identification has been suggested with Nicetas David the Paphlagonian, author of the *Life of Ignatius*.[55] For one thing, John Scylitzes lists Nicetas the Paphlagonian among those who wrote histories after Theophanes, one of which included a "denunciation of a patriarch" that could easily refer to Nicetas' persistent denunciations of Photius.[56] Moreover, a thirteenth-century polemical treatise by the Dominican monk Pantaleon the Deacon cites "a chronicle under the name of 'the Paphlagonian,' in which execrable and almost unheard-of crimes are related about Photius in order to condemn him."[57] Finally, the fourteenth-century church historian Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus says that he had read a story about Cyril of Alexandria "in the secret history by Nicetas the Philosopher, also known as David, and by other [writers]." Strikingly, the same story, that Cyril abandoned his hostility to John Chrysostom after seeing a vision of John in heaven, appears with clear verbal parallels in the corresponding part of the chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon.[58]

return to the Church; 922/23 was presumably the date when the papal legates approved the Union. (Cf. Jenkins and Westerink, *Nicholas I*, p. xxvi.)

55 This identification, first made by Markopoulos, "Χρονογραφία," pp. 163–70, has been disputed by Winkelmann, "Hat Niketas?" (see n. 56 below), but has been confirmed with additional arguments by Paschalides, "From Hagiography."

56 Scylitzes, pp. 3–4. Winkelmann, "Hat Niketas?" p. 149, believes that Scylitzes is referring here to the anti-Photian *Life of Ignatius*; but Scylitzes is criticizing these histories for their biases, and he of course knew the difference between a history and a saint's life, which was supposed to champion a saint against his enemies and could not fairly be criticized for doing so.

57 Pantaleon the Deacon, *Tractatus contra Graecorum errores*, Migne, *PG* 140, col. 557B (*chronicon nomine Paphlagonis*), slightly misquoted by Paschalides, "From Hagiography," p. 166.

58 Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus XIV.28, Migne, *PG* 146, cols. 1149D–1152C (ἐν ἀποκρύφῳ ἱστορίᾳ ... Νικήτα φιλοσόφου τοῦ καὶ Δαυῒδ καὶ ἄλλων). Winkelmann, "Hat Niketas?" pp. 138–44, quotes the parallel passage from the unpublished part of Pseudo-Symeon (cf. Cedrenus I, pp. 575–76, who copies Pseudo-Symeon); Winkelmann nonetheless suggests that Xanthopulus probably meant by a "secret history" a lost "appendix" added by Nicetas to one of his two surviving works on John Chrysostom, neither of which mentions Cyril's vision. This seems much less plausible than Markopoulos' conjecture that Winkelmann rejects, because, besides forcing us to assume that Pseudo-Symeon and Xanthopulus independently discovered a minor and obscure text, Winkelmann's conjecture requires an unlikely translation of Xanthopulus' ἐν ἀποκρύφῳ ἱστορίᾳ and cannot explain Xanthopulus' καὶ ἄλλων.

The history described by our fourteenth-century reviewer, a contemporary of Xanthopulus, could appropriately have been called a "secret history." In fact, *Secret History* was probably its overall title, which is otherwise unknown but may well have appeared in its first book, which our reviewer failed to find.[59] Like the subtitle of Book II, *Concerning New Ways of Wisdom*, the title *Secret History* seems to mean a history that revealed previously unknown facts, particularly about Photius. As for the "other" writers, the history described by the reviewer mostly summarized works by Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Evagrius, who were therefore in some sense its co-authors. Because Xanthopulus consulted those authors directly until our text of his history ends with 610, he would have found little of independent value for his purposes in the *Secret History* of Nicetas, and we should not necessarily expect to find further parallels between Xanthopulus and Pseudo-Symeon.

What we know of Nicetas David the Paphlagonian corresponds very well with what we know of the "secular and sacred history" and of the common source of Pseudo-Symeon, Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and the *Life of Euthymius*. Nicetas David, also known as "the Philosopher" and "the Rhetor," was a learned, contentious, impassioned, and eccentric character.[60] His works, some of which remain unedited, amount to some seventy-eight items, including his *Life of Ignatius*, other saints' lives, letters, homilies, commentaries on the Bible and the Fathers, poems, and his lost *Secret History*. Nicetas therefore fits the fourteenth-century reviewer's description of an historian who had "composed many other books" and was "extremely learned and a consummate expert in Holy Scripture." According to the reviewer, this historian wrote in his old age at Heraclea Pontica, in Paphlagonia, which was an oddly provincial place for a scholar to choose to retire unless, like Nicetas, he was a native of Paphlagonia and had property, relatives, or memories to induce him to return to it.[61]

Like the historian of the "secular and sacred history," Nicetas loathed Photius, as he amply demonstrates in his *Life of Ignatius*, which goes out of its way to condemn the twice-deposed patriarch. That life also includes statements very similar in content to some in Pseudo-Symeon's additions to Symeon. For example, both the *Life of Ignatius* and Pseudo-Symeon give indignant descriptions of the blasphemies and obscenities of Michael III's drinking companion Theophilus,

[59] This title should, however, not be taken as a reference to the untitled work of Procopius that the Byzantines sometimes called ἀνέκδοτα ("unpublished things") but is usually known in English by the modern title of *Secret History*.

[60] On Nicetas, another author on whom much remains to be said, see Paschalides, *Νικήτας* (with pp. 253–58 on the general history), Lebrun, *Nicétas*, Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 91–102 (who at p. 93 n. 5 accepts Winkelmann's rejection of the attribution of a general history to Nicetas without reconsidering the evidence), Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 217–19, and Jenkins, "Note."

[61] On Heraclea (modern Ereğli in Turkey), see Belke, *Paphlagonien*, pp. 208–16, noting on p. 209 n. 22 that in 535 Justinian transferred Heraclea along with the other cities of the province of Honorias to the civil province of Paphlagonia, though the ecclesiastical province of Honorias continued to exist. While in Nicetas' time the city was in the Bucellarian Theme rather than the Theme of Paphlagonia, a classicizing author like Nicetas would still have called himself a Paphlagonian, not a Bucellarian (or an Honorian).

who dressed up as patriarch of Constantinople in order to insult Ignatius.[62] Both the *Life of Ignatius* and Pseudo-Symeon relate how Photius gained the favor of Basil I by forging and then explicating a prophecy about the dynasty of a certain Beclas, which Photius explained as an acronym of Basil, his wife, Eudocia, and their sons, Constantine, Leo, Alexander, and Stephen.[63] The *Life of Ignatius* and Pseudo-Symeon both include heated denunciations of Photius' associate Theodore Santabarenus.[64] Although the life and Pseudo-Symeon share no close verbal parallels, close parallels could hardly be expected if Nicetas wrote the *Secret History* that served as Pseudo-Symeon's source some fourteen years after he wrote the *Life of Ignatius*, in 907.

A chapter in the *Life of Euthymius* provides us with a brief biography of Nicetas up to 909.[65] It records that Nicetas was raised by his uncle Paul the Paphlagonian, who later became sacellarius of the patriarch of Constantinople and abbot of the Monastery of St. Phocas, in the northern suburbs of the capital. After surpassing all his fellow students, Nicetas taught on his own in Constantinople and gained a brilliant reputation that reached the ears of the emperor Leo VI. Suddenly, however, Nicetas renounced his teaching, gave away all his property to his students and the poor, and retired to a cavelike cell on the coast of the Black Sea, evidently by the town of Media, near the Bulgarian border.[66] When the emperor, wishing to summon Nicetas to the palace in order to recognize his erudition, asked Paul where his nephew was, Paul claimed not to know. Later, however, in the middle of 907, the commander of the Theme of Thrace arrested Nicetas at Media, charged him with "fleeing to the Bulgarians," and sent him to the emperor in chains.

Leo interrogated Nicetas, who denied that he had been trying to flee to Bulgaria. He was further accused of having called himself Christ, which he also denied, explaining himself by quoting a Psalm that called all men "sons of the Most High" (Ps. 81.6 [82.6]). Leo had Nicetas flogged and imprisoned, and made further inquiries. One of Nicetas' students showed the emperor a work by Nicetas that included denunciations of Leo, the patriarch Euthymius, and the whole Church. The emperor was irate. Under further interrogation, Nicetas at first claimed that he had written nothing of the sort, but when the text was read out he was unable to deny that it was his. Prodded by a gesture from the postal logothete, the scholar threw himself at the emperor's feet. Leo, encouraged by Nicetas' uncle Paul and Nicetas' former teacher Arethas, wanted to punish Nicetas severely.

[62] Cf. Nicetas the Paphlagonian, *Life of Ignatius* 528B–C, with Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 661.13–664.4 (*Theophanes Continuatus* IV.37–39, *Life of Basil* 21–23).

[63] Cf. Nicetas the Paphlagonian, *Life of Ignatius* 565C–568C, with Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 689.5–690.3.

[64] Cf. Nicetas the Paphlagonian, *Life of Ignatius* 568C–D, with Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 693.14–694.13.

[65] *Life of Euthymius* chap. 16. For the Monastery of St. Phocas, see Janin, *Géographie*, pp. 498–99, and for the Monastery of Agathus, see Janin, *Églises*, p. 23.

[66] On Media (modern Midye in Turkish Thrace), see Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, pp. 519–22, especially 521–22 and plates 102–4, on the cave monastery of St. Nicholas, a little outside the city. Nicetas, however, lived not in the monastery but in a separate hermitage.

With great difficulty, however, the patriarch Euthymius managed to persuade Leo to show Nicetas mercy. Nicetas spent the next two years in the Monastery of Agathus, across the Bosporus from the capital. Though the preserved part of the *Life of Euthymius* says nothing more about Nicetas, the complete text presumably explained what happened to him after 909.

We know from other sources that Nicetas had joined Arethas in vehemently protesting the fourth marriage of Leo VI, in 906. On Christmas Day of that year, the patriarch Nicholas invited Nicetas to supper and asked his help in persuading Arethas to accept the marriage, only to be rebuffed.[67] Early in 907, when Arethas changed sides, Nicetas repudiated Arethas as a traitor and an apostate. Evidently Nicetas became so disgusted with both Church and state that he gave away his property and became a hermit. A long comment in Nicetas' *Life of Ignatius* obliquely denounces Leo for his fourth marriage and the patriarch Euthymius and the whole Church for accepting it. This passage has been plausibly identified as the text that Nicetas could not disown when it was read during his interrogation, in 907, shortly after he had composed it.[68] Probably he had thought his comment was so subtly expressed that only his sympathizers would notice what he meant. Unfortunately for him, one of his students betrayed him, and after the meaning had been pointed out, it was clear enough. For Nicetas to be relegated to the Monastery of Agathus for two years was not a severe punishment, because he had already become a hermit and assumed a monastic name, though he had taken no regular monastic vows. Nicetas evidently chose the monastic name David in honor of the Psalmist, since he cited a Psalm during his interrogation and at some point wrote a commentary on the Psalms.[69]

We know about the next stage of Nicetas' life from a damaged fragment that seems to be part of a saint's life of Nicetas himself, apparently written by one of his loyal disciples.[70] Its author always gives Nicetas his monastic name, David.

[67] The source is a letter of Nicetas himself to Arethas (edited in Arethas, *Scripta* II, pp. 168–74); cf. Westerink, "Nicetas," p. 179.

[68] The identification of this text as *Life of Ignatius* 505D–508D was made by Jenkins, "Note," pp. 244–47. Westerink, "Nicetas" p. 181, rejects Jenkins' identification because he thinks that what Nicetas had written should have been much more explicit; but to denounce the reigning emperor and church authorities was always dangerous, and since Nicetas thought he could deny what he had meant he must have written somewhat ambiguously.

[69] See Paschalides, *Νικήτας* pp. 243–44, and Lebrun, *Nicétas* p. 21.

[70] See Flusin, "Fragment" I (introduction, text, and translation) and "Fragment" II (commentary, with the conjecture that the fragment is from a life of Nicetas, not from the missing part of the *Life of Euthymius*, which is much more sympathetic to Leo VI and Euthymius). Flusin, "Fragment" II, pp. 254–56, however, seems to be mistaken that the chronology of the text is inconsistent, because he incorrectly assumes that the "twenty full months" of Nicetas' confinement in the Monastery of St. Phocas (line 18) were continuous. Since Nicetas' "testing" was in its "fifth month" at a beginning of Lent that fell in February (lines 33–34, presumably meaning February 11, 910), it began in October 909, when he was evidently taken from the Monastery of Agathus (where he had not been "tested" during the two years that began approximately in November 907). Then, after refusing the emperor's

After Nicetas-David had completed his two years in the Monastery of Agathus, in the fall of 909 the emperor summoned him and tried to win him over, which evidently meant persuading him to accept Leo's fourth marriage. When Nicetas refused the emperor's blandishments, he was relegated to his uncle Paul's monastery, St. Phocas. Though his uncle remained hostile, Nicetas was supported by his father and two brothers, who also suffered the emperor's displeasure. One brother was supposedly treated so badly that he fell ill and died. Nicetas' father, Andrew, who was Paul's brother and a priest, returned to his church and his wife in Paphlagonia, taking his third son, Peter, with him, and dying there. Nicetas' loyal students had to take refuge in various places.

Nicetas remained in his uncle's monastery, where he was beaten, deprived of food, and not allowed to bathe, so that he became infested with "countless lice." The emperor soon summoned him again, offered him a high office, and tried to persuade him to marry; but Nicetas firmly refused, rejecting any marriage as incompatible with following Christ. In February 910 Leo summoned Nicetas once more and offered him a professorship of philosophy if he would pray God to forgive the emperor's sins. When Nicetas again refused, Leo slapped his face sixty times and returned him to his uncle's monastery. There the monks abused him until in March 911 his uncle allowed him to move with two servants to a hermitage attached to the monastery. After Epiphany (Jan. 6) 912 the uncle forcibly returned Nicetas to the monastery, where he remained until Leo VI died, that May. Then Nicetas was released and joined his brother Peter. Although the brothers were attacked by enemies whose identity is unclear from our fragmentary text, the new emperor, Alexander, allowed them to go wherever they wished. The text breaks off before telling us more about Nicetas.

Some have deduced from the *Life of Euthymius* that Nicetas was still a young man who had just finished his studies and begun to teach in 907, so that he was born around 885.[71] If so, Nicetas was in his mid-thirties in 921, and even by Byzantine standards could hardly be called "very old," as the anonymous historian claimed to be when he wrote. Though that historian could have written a little after 921, he must have finished before 925 if the *Life of Euthymius* depends on his history. On the other hand, most of Nicetas' seventy-eight works are ascribed to him as "rhetor" or "philosopher," and only a dozen include his new monastic name, David, as if he had done most of his extensive writing before retiring in

proposals and gifts (lines 1–5, a mutilated passage), Nicetas was relegated to his uncle's monastery, St. Phocas, until he was allowed to go to the Hermitage of the Archangel at the beginning of another Lent (lines 60–65, presumably meaning March 3, 911, after sixteen full months at St. Phocas from November 909). Nicetas remained at the hermitage until he was forced to return to St. Phocas after the next Christmas and Epiphany (lines 65–69, evidently meaning January 6, 912), then remained there until Leo VI's death, in May (lines 70–72, obviously meaning May 11, 912), after four more full months at St. Phocas, to make twenty full months (16 + 4) in all.

[71] Jenkins, "Note," p. 243 and n. 18, followed by subsequent scholars without further consideration.

907.[72] If Nicetas was born as late as 885, we should be surprised by the detailed knowledge he shows in his *Life of Ignatius* both of Ignatius, who was born around 798 and died in 877, and of Photius, who was born around 813 and deposed in 882. The last event explicitly mentioned in the *Life of Ignatius* occurred in 878.[73] If Nicetas began to gather information on Ignatius only in his hermitage, in 907, his familiarity with Ignatius' long life would be hard to explain, as would his passionately held opinions about events that had happened long before he was born. Although in the *Life of Ignatius* Nicetas was obviously trying to discredit Leo VI and Leo's patriarch, Euthymius, by implicitly comparing them to the Caesar Bardas and Bardas' patriarch, Photius, these comparisons were damning only if Nicetas was sure that Bardas and Photius had acted atrociously in 858.

In fact, the *Life of Euthymius* neither says nor implies that Nicetas had recently finished his studies or was particularly young in 907. It rather shows that, before retiring to his hermitage and being arrested, in 907, Nicetas had studied with Arethas long enough to distinguish himself among Arethas' students and had taught long enough to gain a brilliant reputation and a large following. Arethas seems to have taught from about 877 to about 890.[74] Probably he took students who had already finished their secondary education; we certainly cannot assume that he was Nicetas' first teacher. If Nicetas was one of Arethas' first students, he was probably in his late teens in 877, so that he was born in Paphlagonia around 860, and may have come to Constantinople for his secondary education soon after Photius' deposition and Ignatius' reinstatement, in 867. As a friend and perhaps a student of Photius, Arethas could have told Nicetas a great deal about Photius and Ignatius. In fact, what Pseudo-Symeon says about Photius' parents and childhood looks very much like a pejorative reworking of an account that was originally favorable to Photius.[75] If Nicetas was born around 860, by 921 he was about sixty, which by Byzantine standards could make him "very old," especially if he was in poor health.[76] Even a learned man might write carelessly if he feared that he was nearing the end of his life and had to race to finish his work.

[72] For the MS titles of Nicetas' works, see Paschalides, *Νικήτας* pp.123–288. Westerink, "Nicetas," p. 182, observes that the preponderance of works without the name David in their title "might indicate that [Nicetas] took vows only later in life." In fact, Nicetas seems never to have taken formal monastic vows, probably because he was unwilling to commit himself to obey an abbot, but he evidently did renounce the world when he took the name David. Note that the *Life of Ignatius*, probably composed in 907, is already ascribed to "Nicetas the Paphlagonian, also known as David, the servant of Jesus Christ."

[73] As noted by Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 217–18, who thinks the *Life of Ignatius* was originally written soon after 878 by someone else and only revised by Nicetas. While this hypothesis seems far-fetched, Karlin-Hayter's reluctance to assume that the life was written by someone born around 885 is well founded.

[74] See above, p. 125.

[75] See Treadgold, "Photius," p. 3.

[76] See above, p. 22 and n. 93. Note that the reviewer describes the anonymous writer who was "very old" c. 921 as having lived "in the days of Basil [I] the Macedonian and Leo [VI] the Wise," as if the writer had no clear recollections of the reign of Michael III (842–67) and so was born no earlier than about 860.

We have no clear evidence that Nicetas lived much past 921. If he was the author of the "secular and sacred history," he probably finished it before 922/23, when the papacy declared Leo VI's fourth marriage invalid, an event that Nicetas would have been delighted to record.[77] Saints' lives could be composed only after their subjects were dead, and Nicetas' hagiographer seems to have written when memories of the events of 909–12 were still fresh.[78] A treatise and letter in which Nicetas calculated the date of the end of the world has been dated to between 909 and 913, to 942, or to 950 on the basis of its obscure and dubious arithmetic; but its actual date was probably 906/7, because in the letter Nicetas says that the corruption of the Eastern Church had not affected the Western Church, as he would surely not have said after the pope had condoned Leo VI's fourth marriage, in 907.[79] We have a later report that the "godless Turks" desecrated the tomb of "the holy Nicetas the Philosopher, who is also the Paphlagonian," 170 years after Nicetas' death. Since Nicetas' tomb was in Paphlagonia and probably at Heraclea, which was still Byzantine in 1081 and recovered from the Turks by 1097, Nicetas presumably died before 927.[80]

Nicetas' biography might be conjecturally reconstructed as follows. He was born around 860 in Paphlagonia, quite possibly in Heraclea Pontica, where he later chose to retire. His father, Andrew, was a priest, and had two other sons. Around 870 Nicetas' uncle Paul, who may have been fifteen to twenty years older than his nephew and already launched on an ecclesiastical career in Constantinople, seems to have brought Nicetas there to educate him in a good secondary school. Around 877 Nicetas began more advanced studies under Arethas, whom he impressed by his ability. Later Nicetas himself became a distinguished teacher, perhaps taking over Arethas' school after Arethas entered the Church, around 890. Nicetas continued to teach until soon after Christmas 906, when he decided to renounce the world, give away his property, and become a hermit in Thrace, near Media, under

[77] See Jenkins and Westerink, *Nicholas I*, pp. xxvi and 539.

[78] As observed by Flusin, "Fragment" II, pp. 259–60.

[79] Westerink, "Nicetas," pp. 183–86, suggests these dates but also admits, "The scholarship of the letter is as shaky as its arithmetic." Note that the treatise and letter are both ascribed to "Nicetas the Philosopher," without the name David that Nicetas evidently assumed in 907. The attempt by Paschalides, *Νικήτας* pp. 112–15, to identify Nicetas with the "imperial cleric Nicetas" who wrote a letter to Constantine VII after 947 seems to have nothing in its favor, especially because at least one of the many titles in our MSS would surely have assigned Nicetas that rank if he had held it.

[80] See Paschalides, *Νικήτας* pp. 115–17 (on the Turks' decapitation of Nicetas' skeleton, reported in the Dresden synaxarium) and 129, etc. (for the location of Nicetas' tomb in Paphlagonia, recorded in various MSS). On the Turkish occupation of Heraclea and its recovery by the Byzantines, see Vryonis, *Decline*, pp. 114 and 116. The notice in the Dresden synaxarium, which says that Nicetas died on a January 17, may well depend on someone who had seen the recently desecrated tomb, found Nicetas' date of death inscribed on it, and calculated the time that had elapsed. Although the eleventh-century date of the Dresden synaxarium cannot be taken too literally, if it is even roughly correct it suggests that Nicetas' tomb was desecrated before 1100.

the name David. His motive was doubtless his disgust at Leo VI's fourth marriage, and at Patriarch Nicholas' condoning it.

While Nicetas fumed in his hermitage in 907, he vented his frustration by writing his *Life of Ignatius*. In it he praised Ignatius for suffering deposition rather than accept Bardas' debauchery, and condemned Photius for being appointed patriarch because he tolerated that debauchery. Nicetas implied a comparison with those who in his own time rejected or accepted Leo VI's fourth marriage. An uncompromising moralist, Nicetas thought that men, as sons of God, should live up to Christ's example. He seems to have worked himself into such a frenzy of indignation at the corruption of the Byzantine Church and state that he tried to flee to Bulgaria. He was then arrested and detained during the rest of Leo's reign. His hagiographer probably exaggerated his hero's sufferings, because Nicetas had two servants even during his detention, monks were not supposed to wash or eat very much, and the illness and death of Nicetas' brother may not have been due to mistreatment. After the emperor Alexander released Nicetas, in 912, he may have retired to Heraclea, where he probably completed his *Secret History* around 921, soon before he died.

Nicetas' *Secret History*

We know a good deal about Nicetas the Paphlagonian's *Secret History* if it was the "secular and sacred history" that was summarized by our fourteenth-century reviewer and served as a source for Pseudo-Symeon, Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, the *Life of Basil*, the *Life of Euthymius*, and Xanthopulus. Having the *Secret History*'s Book I and the first part of Book II, with Nicetas' summaries of the New Testament and several otherwise preserved church histories, would probably contribute little to our knowledge, though the passages on Cyril of Alexandria in Pseudo-Symeon and Xanthopulus show that Nicetas did add some information not in his sources. More material from Nicetas' history may be identified when the part of Pseudo-Symeon before 813 is properly edited and studied. For example, Nicetas was probably the direct source of Pseudo-Symeon's stories about Leo IV's chamberlain Theophanes, which Nicetas may himself have found in a lost saint's life of Theophanes the Chamberlain.[81] Yet the most original and important part of the *Secret History* was the last part of Book II, subtitled *Concerning New Ways of Wisdom*, which treated the period after 813.

The *Life of Basil*, Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and the *Life of Euthymius* must include some other borrowings from Nicetas' *Secret History* that Pseudo-Symeon did not use. For instance, Pseudo-Symeon omits much of the material that Nicetas evidently took from Theognostus the Grammarian and that was copied by Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus*. The passages in the other four works that parallel Pseudo-Symeon often seem to reproduce more of their common source than Pseudo-Symeon does, as if Pseudo-Symeon abridged the passages he took

[81] See pp. 73–74 and n. 140 above.

from Nicetas more than the other compilers did. Moreover, when Nicetas and the real chronicle of Symeon give parallel accounts of the same events, Pseudo-Symeon appears always to have used the real Symeon in preference to Nicetas. We shall see that the *Life of Basil* and the fourth books of Genesius and of *Theophanes Continuatus* all show indirect knowledge of the lost History of Basil and Leo, presumably from Nicetas' *Secret History*. The use of the indiction number for three dates in 866–67 in the *Life of Basil* and *Theophanes Continuatus* may also show a link with Nicetas, who in his *Life of Ignatius* uses the indiction number for one of these dates in 867.[82]

Nicetas' account of the reign of Leo V must have consisted largely of prophecies, which foretold Leo's accession, warned Patriarch Nicephorus of Leo's impiety, persuaded Leo to restore Iconoclasm, and foreshadowed Leo's murder by Michael II. Here, besides Theognostus the Grammarian, Nicetas' sources probably included Ignatius the Deacon's *Life of Nicephorus* and the lost poem by Theophanes Confessor. For the reign of Michael II, Nicetas mentioned the emperor's second marriage, to the lapsed nun Euphrosyne, of which Nicetas surely disapproved, and Michael's ruinous wars with Thomas the Slav and the Arab invaders of Crete and Sicily. Here Nicetas' sources included Ignatius the Deacon's poem *On Thomas*, which the historian mistakenly preferred to Theognostus' account. For all his interest in the supernatural, Nicetas seems to have shown some critical sense by mentioning points on which his sources disagreed and repeating material without a date when he was unsure where it belonged.[83]

For the reign of Theophilus, Nicetas recorded that emperor's persecution of iconophiles and loss of Amorium to the Arabs, along with several stories of the emperor's private life. Not knowing the Continuation of Theophanes from 829 to 844, Nicetas had to rely mostly on quite imaginative saints' lives of Theophilus' generals Manuel the Armenian and Theophobus the Persian, written perhaps around 900, when memories of them were fading, and on a more reliable account of the Forty-Two Martyrs of Amorium, though seemingly not one of those that has reached us. The monks of the monasteries founded by Manuel and Theophobus appear to have written their biographies in order to conceal the

[82] See *Life of Basil* 17 (= *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.41: Bardas is murdered on April 21 [866] of the 14th indiction), *Life of Basil* 18 (= *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.43: Basil is crowned co-emperor on May 26 [866] of the 14th indiction), and *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.44 (= Nicetas, *Life of Ignatius* 540A: Basil succeeds Michael III on September 24 [867] of the 1st indiction). *Theophanes Continuatus* III.39 records a Byzantine naval defeat by the Arabs of Crete in October of the eighth indiction under Theophilus (829), a date that also probably comes from Nicetas. Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and the *Life of Basil* may well have omitted some of Nicetas' indictional dates, which some Byzantines considered unsuitable for formal prose, and Nicetas probably gave exact dates more often in his *Secret History* than in his *Life of Ignatius*, since chronology was more appropriate to history than to hagiography. Nicetas' use of dates must, however, have been limited to those that appeared in his sources, which may not have used them very much.

[83] See above, pp. 81–88.

unpalatable reality that both men had died iconoclasts.[84] While these biographies probably included some of the details of Theophilus' private life and persecution of iconophiles recounted by Nicetas, he seems also to have used other written and oral sources. One oral source may have been an unnamed monk who lived until the reign of Leo VI and claimed to have rebuked Theophilus and his tutor John the Grammarian for their Iconoclasm.[85] Another source evidently told Nicetas how the future patriarch Methodius had won Theophilus' favor by explaining a prophecy that Methodius himself had forged. Since Methodius' example seems to have inspired Photius to forge the prophecy that won him the favor of Basil I, perhaps Methodius told the story to Photius, who told it to Arethas, who in turn told it to Nicetas.[86]

For much of Michael III's reign, Nicetas continued to depend on the saint's life of Manuel, according to which Manuel must have died at least twenty years later than his actual death, in 838. Nicetas described the restoration of icons in 843 at length, dwelling on the leading part taken by Manuel, who was actually dead at the time, and the perfidy and magic arts of the deposed patriarch John the Grammarian. Then Nicetas began to use the lost History of Basil and Leo, which began with the rise of Basil in 855. By this time Nicetas must also have had information from Arethas and other oral sources. For example, Nicetas apparently provided two alternative but equally legendary versions of the conversion of the Bulgars, one ascribing it to the sister of their ruler Boris and the other to a monk named Methodius (apparently a confused memory of the brother of Constantine-Cyril), who painted a scene of the Last Judgment that terrified

[84] See Grégoire, "Manuel," describing the accounts in Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* that are evidently derived from their common source, which Grégoire left unidentified but was presumably Nicetas' *Secret History*. Note that Nicetas' characteristic etymologies are appended to passages that seem to come from both the Life of Theophobus (Genesius III.3, with an etymology of Byze; Genesius III.5 and Pseudo-Symeon, p. 637.2–17, with etymologies of Paphlagonia, Sinope, and Amastris) and the Life of Manuel (Genesius III.13–14, with etymologies of Tarsus; Genesius IV.8, with an etymology of the Cistern of Aspar). See also below, pp. 186 (on Genesius' Book III) and 192–93 (on *Theophanes Continuatus* Book III). Grégoire's conclusions about Manuel have been attacked in *PmbZ* I, *Prolegomena* pp. 22 and 289–90 and no. 4707, which interprets a lead seal identifying Manuel as "preceptor of the prince [βάγυλος τοῦ δεσπότου]" to mean that Manuel was preceptor of the young Michael III after 842, thus excluding the date of 838 for Manuel's death reported by Symeon and accepted by Grégoire and most other scholars. Yet the seal cannot refer to Michael III, because in this period the title "prince" (δεσπότης) was used only for a junior emperor, not the senior emperor, which Michael was after 842. (See Grierson et al., *Catalogue* III.1, pp. 178–79.) The obvious and unproblematic solution is that Manuel was preceptor of the young Theophilus before he became senior emperor in 829, when Manuel was already an experienced general.

[85] *Theophanes Continuatus* III.12.

[86] See Treadgold, "Prophecies," especially pp. 234–37 on the similar prophecies of Methodius and Photius, both recorded in Pseudo-Symeon (the prophecy by Photius is also in the *Life of Ignatius*), who evidently took them from Nicetas' *Secret History*. Note that the incoherence of Pseudo-Symeon's story of Methodius indicates that the original source was considerably more detailed.

Boris.[87] While describing the dissipation, frivolity, and blasphemies of Michael III and his courtiers, Nicetas reserved his worst vituperation for Photius, who he said had denied the Cross to a Jewish magician in return for his knowledge of pagan literature.

Nicetas continued summarizing the History of Basil and Leo for his account of the reigns of both of those emperors, but by the time of Basil I's accession in 867 he could also draw on his own memories and those of his contemporaries. Presumably he used oral sources when he described not just how the deposed patriarch Photius won over Basil by his fabricated prophecy but how Photius' "Manichaean" crony Santabarenus manipulated Basil by pretending to conjure up the spirit of Basil's dead son, Constantine. Nicetas' sources for Santabarenus' intrigues also apparently included a letter from Bishop Stylianus of Neocaesarea to Pope Stephen V (885–91).[88] Some of Nicetas' oral sources were extremely dubious ones, like those for his accounts of mythical scheming by the captured African emir "Soldanus" in Italy and of the demons in the Peloponnesus who received early news of the fall of Syracuse, in 878.[89]

Beginning with Leo VI's accession, in 886, both Genesius' history and the *Life of Basil* end, and the sources for Nicetas' history that remain are Pseudo-Symeon and the *Life of Euthymius*. However, of Pseudo-Symeon's six additions to the first edition of Symeon's chronicle, three have parallels in Symeon's second edition. Symeon's second edition supplies more information than Pseudo-Symeon in one of these passages, concerning Arab and Rus' raids around Constantinople, which Nicetas presumably considered divine punishments for Leo VI's sins.[90] Though Symeon seems not to have used Nicetas' *Secret History* for his first edition until the History of Basil and Leo ended, in 912, after that date the first edition does appear to depend on Nicetas' history, at least indirectly. One indication is that Symeon's chronology is generally accurate up to the coronation of Romanus I, on December 17, 920, and of Romanus' wife on the following Epiphany, but then Symeon misdates the coronation of Romanus' son Christopher, which actually occurred in May 921, and the Church Union of July 920, apparently because Symeon learned neither date from Nicetas.[91] Nicetas seems therefore to have

[87] Cf. *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.14–15, with Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 664.13–665.2 and 665. 18–21; see *PmbZ* I, no. 4979, for the identification of Cyril's brother Methodius.

[88] Cf. Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 693.14–694.13, with Mansi XVI, cols. 432C–433B, and Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 40–44.

[89] See below, pp. 172–73 and 174.

[90] See p. 150 n. 94 below.

[91] Cf. Symeon I, 136.11 (where Nicetas' history would have ended), with 136.12–14, with the dates in Wahlgren's apparatus. Note that Christopher's coronation is dated to the fifth indiction (916/17 or 931/32), though May 921 fell in the ninth indiction, and that the Church Union is dated correctly to the eighth indiction but incorrectly placed after the coronations of Romanus, his wife, and Christopher; then the exile of Stephen the Magister is correctly dated to February 8 of the ninth indiction (921) but placed after Christopher's coronation, though it had occurred more than three months earlier. As Jenkins, "Chronological Accuracy," p. 95, points out, the Bulgarian occupation of Adrianople in September 914 in Symeon I, 132.16, came after the Arab raid in A.H. 301 (ended July 28, 914), in Symeon I,

ended his history with Epiphany 921 but failed to mention the Church Union of 920, which he surely disliked because it offered mercy to those who had condoned Leo's fourth marriage. Yet from Nicetas' point of view the exile of the adulterous Zoë Carbonopsina and the displacement of her bastard son by another emperor gave the *Secret History* an acceptable ending.

As we can see both from the remains of his *Secret History* and from his *Life of Ignatius*, Nicetas was interested in prophecies, etymologies, and poetry. His main source for etymologies seems to have been the sixth-century *Ethnica* of Stephen of Byzantium, much of which is now lost.[92] Probably Nicetas described Basil I's appearance from personal experience, since he seems to have been in his twenties when Basil died, in 886.[93] Nicetas seems also to have drawn on his own memory in recording the raids by Leo of Tripoli, in 904, and by the Rus', in 907, which he illustrated by adding etymologies for the places that the Arabs and Rus' raided; Pseudo-Symeon copied the etymologies but obtusely omitted the narratives that they embellished.[94] Nicetas further described how Samonas' servant Constantine the Paphlagonian, after being slandered by his master, was promoted by Leo VI to grand chamberlain, and how a vision of Christ announced this promotion to Constantine's father, founder of the Monastery of Nosiae.[95] Here Nicetas went into enough detail that we may guess that he was a friend or relative of his fellow Paphlagonian Constantine. In describing Leo Phocas' revolt, in 919, Nicetas gave etymologies of Constantinople's Asian suburbs of Chrysopolis, Chalcedon, and Damalis, including eight hexameters purporting to be the epitaph of a woman named Damalis.[96]

Nicetas cannot have expected a wide readership for a work entitled *Secret History* that denounced nearly everyone connected with the contemporary Church and state for compromising the faith. What we know about the *Secret History* gives us little reason to dispute the critique of its style and objectivity made by our late Byzantine reviewer, even if that criticism was somewhat exaggerated because of

132.17 (Wahlgren's apparatus is mistaken here; see Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* II.1, p. 229 n. 2); but this is a fairly minor error. For Symeon's use of Nicetas, probably through the mediation of the history of Manuel the Protospatharius, see below, pp. 200–201.

92 See Diller, "Excerpts," who suggests that this material was drawn not only from the complete text of Stephen's *Ethnica* but from the ancient geographer Strabo and perhaps other authors, as is possible, and that Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and Pseudo-Symeon used this material "as the property of a school of chronography," which whatever that may mean is a more complicated and less plausible hypothesis than a common literary source. On Stephen, see also Kazhdan et al., *ODB* III, pp. 1953–54, and Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 530–31.

93 Pseudo-Symeon, p. 686.12–16.

94 See Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 705.14–707.10, and Symeon's second edition in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, 366.11–17 and 367.5–22, with the perceptive explanation of Jenkins, "Supposed Russian Attack."

95 Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 712.2–22 (cf. Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, 375.10–376.8) and 713.13–715.6, referring to the Monastery of Nosiae at Chalcedon (see Janin, *Églises*, p. 59); at Symeon I, 133.61, for ἐν Ὁσίαις read ἐν Νοσίαις.

96 Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 728.21–729.19.

the reviewer's indignation at Nicetas' denunciations of Photius. Certainly in the *Life of Ignatius* Nicetas never pretends to impartiality or literary elegance in trying to demonstrate Ignatius' virtues and Photius' iniquity. Arethas, himself not a particularly elegant writer, sharply criticized the composition of Nicetas' encomium of Gregory of Nazianzus.[97] Nonetheless, as our anonymous reviewer observed, Nicetas was a learned man. In his *Life of Ignatius* he uses the optative mood twice in the introduction and calls Constantinople "Byzantium" and the Rus' "Scyths."[98] The passages that Genesius and Pseudo-Symeon appear to have taken from Nicetas' *Secret History* are written in a straightforward if often polemical manner. When they are unclear, the reason usually seems to be that Pseudo-Symeon abridged them too drastically. The other writers who used the *Secret History* apparently discarded its polemics and softened its style with rhetorical padding.

To be sure, this reconstruction requires us to identify as a single history three independently attested works: the anonymous "secular and sacred history" read by our late Byzantine reviewer, Nicetas' *Secret History* used by Xanthopulus and Pseudo-Symeon, and the common source of Pseudo-Symeon, Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, the *Life of Basil*, and the *Life of Euthymius*. If we were to assume that these three works were different from one another, we would need to postulate three separate but very similar histories written around 921. The authors of all three would have detested Photius, whom the majority of Byzantines revered. All three histories would have recorded obscure and often supernatural information. At least the second and third would have been used by Pseudo-Symeon, who was not an especially assiduous researcher. At least the first and second would have been authored by extremely learned and productive Paphlagonians and largely preserved until the fourteenth century before being lost. To suppose, with no good reason, that three such similar histories were composed around 921 seems much more speculative than to assume that they were the same history.

Like the History of Basil and Leo, Nicetas' *Secret History* was a work of considerable interest that preserved valuable historical evidence and pointed criticisms of contemporary events and personalities. On the other hand, the *Secret History* and the History of Basil and Leo cannot have made pleasant or inspiring reading for later Byzantines. Most Byzantine readers would have been troubled to see the generally good reputations of past emperors and patriarchs debunked and both Church and state denounced in such uncompromising terms. Although Nicetas insisted that Photius and Leo VI were villains, later Byzantine tradition disagreed. The report that Leo VI was the bastard son of Michael III, so that the later Macedonian dynasty was actually Amorian, must also have unsettled many Byzantine readers, just as it still makes some modern scholars uncomfortable, regardless of the evidence. The History of Basil and Leo was read until the late

[97] See Kazhdan, *History* II, p. 95, citing Arethas, *Scripta* I, no. 32, pp. 267–70, a letter from Arethas to Nicetas.

[98] Nicetas the Paphlagonian, *Life of Ignatius*, cols. 488B (ἀπογινώσκοιτο), 489A (πιστεύοιτο), 497B, 512B, and 516D (Byzantium), and 516D (Scyths). On Nicetas' style, cf. Jenkins' remark on its similarity to that of Theodore Daphnopates, at p. 178 n. 93 below.

tenth century, and Nicetas' *Secret History* until the fourteenth, but in the end neither history proved popular enough to reach us in its original form.

Nonetheless, the period from about 820 to 920 was a much more productive age for Byzantine historiography than might appear from the three unremarkable histories that survive in full from those years. If we include the unconventional Hesychius Epitome and the *Bibliotheca* of Photius, at least eleven historical works seem to have been composed during these hundred years. The four that survive complete are the *Bibliotheca*, the *Concise Chronicle* of George the Monk, the "Chronicle of Monemvasia" perhaps by Arethas of Patras, and the *Brief Survey* of Peter of Alexandria. Substantial parts survive of the other seven: the history of Theognostus the Grammarian, the *Scriptor Incertus*, almost certainly by Sergius Confessor, the Hesychius Epitome, almost certainly by Ignatius the Deacon, the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829, its further Continuation from 829 to 844, the History of Basil I and Leo VI, and what was probably the *Secret History* of Nicetas the Paphlagonian. In the unlikely event that Sergius and Nicetas did not write the material attributed to them here, their works would be almost entirely lost, and the total number of histories written during these hundred years would rise from eleven to fourteen.

Although none of these works appears to have been a classic of history or of literature, they all appear to have been competently done. Perhaps the most valuable were Photius' *Bibliotheca* and the remains of the Hesychius Epitome, though neither was a history in the strictest sense. Some may even call the *Bibliotheca* a classic of scholarship. Theognostus' history and the anonymous History of Basil I and Leo VI were apparently well-written narratives by well-informed contemporaries. Sergius Confessor, Nicetas the Paphlagonian, and the anonymous author or authors of the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829 and its further Continuation from 829 to 844 were also well informed, if not distinguished stylists, and their histories transmitted a good deal of important and interesting information. Peter of Alexandria and whoever wrote the "Chronicle of Monemvasia" had modest aims but achieved them. In both quantity and quality, the eleven or so histories written roughly from 820 to 920 compare rather favorably with the eight or so histories written roughly from 720 to 820. Though by the early tenth century Byzantine historiography was not exactly flourishing, neither was it languishing.

5
The Official Histories of Constantine Porphyrogenitus

The reign of Romanus I Lecapenus (920–44), although it was a time of growing prosperity and military success, apparently failed to attract contemporary historians. A poorly educated man of humble origins, Romanus had little interest in patronizing literature. Potential historians, who typically preferred not to record a reign until they knew how it would end, faced problems under Romanus even if they wanted to record earlier times. His predecessor was Constantine VII (913–20), whom Romanus had displaced as both senior emperor and heir apparent after he made his own eldest son, Christopher, the ranking junior emperor. Yet Constantine still held the imperial title. He was married to Romanus' daughter, had crowned Romanus in the first place, and had an hereditary right to the throne, even after he was declared a bastard when his father's fourth marriage was condemned. He also enjoyed enough popular support that he was eventually able to take power. Thus contemporary historians risked Romanus' displeasure if they wrote about Constantine and his dynasty too favorably but also if they wrote too unfavorably, or indeed if they wrote anything at all that reminded readers of Romanus' ambiguous situation. While the aging maverick Nicetas the Paphlagonian could ignore such concerns when he wrote in retirement around 921, any ambitious writer in Constantinople had to contend with them. Only after Constantine's restoration as senior emperor in 945 did aspiring historians know where they stood.

Constantine and the *Historical Excerpts*

Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus ("Born in the Purple") had an interest in history that was unusual among Byzantine emperors.[1] He was born in 905 in the empress's Purple Bedchamber in the Palace, but not to an empress, because at his

[1] On Constantine as a patron of scholarship, see Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 133–52, Ševčenko, "Re-reading," Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, pp. 298–302, 305–8, and 309–46, Wilson, *Scholars*, pp. 140–45, Jenkins' introduction to Constantine, *De Administrando Imperio*, pp. 7–11, Németh, "Imperial Systematization," pp. 101–3, Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* II, pp. 281–96, Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 360–67, and (despite some errors) Toynbee, *Constantine*, pp. 1–25 and 575–605.

birth his mother, Zoë Carbonopsina, was merely the mistress of the thrice-widowed Leo VI. Although the next year Constantine was legitimized retroactively by his father's fourth marriage, that marriage was itself a subject of bitter dispute, as we have seen. Since no one could deny that Constantine had been born in the Purple Bedchamber, he insisted on his epithet of Porphyrogenitus, which came into regular use only with him. His father, Leo, a student of Photius, was known for his learning and writings, and apparently entrusted his son's education to a competent tutor named Theodore, who formed a strong bond with his pupil. Constantine probably owed his later love of scholarship both to his father's reputation and to his tutor's influence. Yet Constantine lost his father at the age of six, in 912, when his mother, Zoë, was exiled by his hostile uncle Alexander. Even after Zoë returned as regent two years later, her hold on power was precarious. In 919, when Constantine was thirteen, Romanus Lecapenus exiled both Zoë and Theodore, even though the tutor had originally invited Romanus to become regent in an effort to protect the young emperor.[2]

Promptly married to Romanus' daughter Helen, then excluded from imperial authority until he was thirty-nine, Constantine consoled himself with scholarship. He seems, however, never to have had a proper teacher after Theodore. In a letter written before 944, Constantine complained, "Because from the very earliest age I was severely starved of the necessities of scholarly sustenance and almost not permitted to suck for a short time at the nipple of scholarly milk—and then, still later, I grew up and gradually matured in the company of boorishness and ignorance—I am in need of men more learned than I and ask to draw my scholarly needs from them."[3] This was not merely conventional literary modesty, because Constantine knew enough to see the defects of his education and did think his senior colleague, Romanus, was an ignorant boor. Except when Constantine recruited better scholars than he was to do his writing for him, his style is usually graceless, and his thinking disorganized and uncritical.[4]

Well before he took power, Constantine became obsessed with discovering as much as he could about the administration, ceremonies, and history of the empire he thought he should be ruling. He seems to have read whatever he could find on those subjects, probably including documents in the imperial archives. Correctly or not, he also believed that his mother, Zoë, was a relative of the chronicler Theophanes Confessor, whom he held in high regard.[5] Constantine probably compiled his first book around 934, a brief treatise *On the Themes* describing the empire's military provinces.[6] Certainly not a history and hardly a literary

[2] On Theodore, see Symeon I, 135.24, 26, and 30, and 136.10. While our first recorded mention of him belongs to 917, he was probably chosen by Leo, because Alexander cannot have cared much about Constantine's education, and Theodore showed no loyalty to Zoë.

[3] See Darrouzès, *Épistoliers*, p. 317, with pp. 59–60 for the date.

[4] Cf. Ševčenko, "Re-reading," pp. 175–89.

[5] See p. 191 and n. 135 below.

[6] For the date, see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, pp. 242–43, citing Ostrogorsky, "Sur la date," pp. 31–46, both largely relying on Constantine's listing of the themes, which indicates that *On the Themes* was composed before the *Tacticon Beneševič*. I cannot accept the arguments

composition at all, it lacks a preface and consists mostly of antiquated geographical lore adapted from sixth-century works by Stephen of Byzantium and Hierocles. *On the Themes* acknowledges contemporary conditions only by arranging its data to fit the themes' current boundaries. It shows a tendency typical of Constantine's later works to copy other texts rather than use his own words, probably because he lacked confidence in his literary ability.

Naturally Constantine resented his long subordination to a man whom he considered a usurper. Later Constantine advised his son to tell anyone who cited the precedent of Romanus' marrying his granddaughter to Peter of Bulgaria, "The lord emperor Romanus was a boorish and uneducated person, not one of those who was raised in the palace from his birth, or had followed Roman customs from the beginning, or was of the well-born imperial dynasty; and consequently he often acted quite presumptuously and arrogantly."[7] Yet Romanus never promoted either of his two younger sons after his eldest son, Christopher, died in 931, leaving Constantine next in line for the throne. Romanus' daughter Helen bore Constantine two sons, whom he named Leo and Romanus after their grandfathers, though only Romanus survived childhood.[8] In 944 the old emperor Romanus formally recognized Constantine as his heir, provoking his own sons to overthrow him that December. Constantine, said to have been reading a book when he heard Romanus' sons were plotting to kill him, thwarted the plot and seized power a month later.[9]

An unassuming but sociable man, Constantine seems to have enjoyed discharging the everyday duties of a senior emperor. He happily participated in imperial ceremonies, liked bestowing gifts and paying official salaries, and was a gracious conversationalist and a solicitous host at state banquets. The Western ambassador Liudprand of Cremona, who disliked most Byzantines, got on well with Constantine, even before Liudprand persuaded the emperor to include him in the payroll of the bureaucracy.[10] While known for his love of good food and wine, Constantine remained slender and kept his dignity. He complained of poor health, but is said to have been tall, erect of bearing, broad-shouldered, and rosy-cheeked.[11] His fifteen years of personal rule (945–59) were long enough that his considerable successes, especially against the Arabs and Magyars, cannot be dismissed as mere accidents. Though doubtless Constantine relied heavily on

for a much later date either of Lounghis, "Sur la date," who relies on a passage insisting on Byzantine control over Sicily that seems an obvious anachronism, or of Ahrweiler, "Sur la date," who relies on a passage mentioning Constantine VII's reception of the relics of Gregory of Nazianzus that looks to me (and looked to Ostrogorsky in a letter she cites on p. 5) like an interpolation, since it refers to Constantine in the third person though elsewhere in *On the Themes* he uses the first person.

[7] Constantine, *De Administrando Imperio* 13.149–53. (Cf. 51.162–72 on Romanus' usurpation in 920.)

[8] On Constantine's son Leo, see Ševčenko, "Re-reading," p. 177 and n. 23.

[9] Liudprand, *Antapodosis* V.22.

[10] Liudprand, *Antapodosis* VI.5–10.

[11] Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, p. 468.

his advisers and generals, as most emperors did, choosing and employing capable subordinates is a necessary talent for any ruler.

The emperor also found and supervised competent scholars to research and compile the scholarly works that he commissioned and sometimes helped to prepare. Three of these works, like *On the Themes*, cannot really be called histories, though they contain much information of historical interest. The text now conventionally known as *De Administrando Imperio*, addressed to Constantine's son Romanus II, combines advice on policy from Constantine himself with excerpts chiefly from archival documents, but also from the *Chronography* of Theophanes and the *Ethnica* of Stephen of Byzantium.[12] The far longer text now known as *On Ceremonies* combines summaries of contemporary court ceremonial with extracts from the archives and a sixth-century history by Peter the Patrician.[13] A short compilation now called *On Imperial Expeditions*, again addressed to Constantine's son Romanus, draws on earlier works and the archives to describe what emperors should do while campaigning and celebrating triumphs.[14] Although each of these three compilations is introduced by a preface, they can be considered literature only by the most lenient standard, and none was meant for a wider readership than emperors and their officials. All three also appear to be unfinished, or at any rate left open for future additions and revisions, and all combine a respect for the past with little sense of history, jumbling together material of different dates from different contexts.[15]

Constantine's historical interests led him not just to read histories but to commission the gigantic anthology of historical quotations now known as the *Historical Excerpts* or the *Excerpta*.[16] Like most of Constantine's other compilations, it seems to have had no formal title. Organized under fifty-three "subjects," some in two volumes, the whole *Historical Excerpts* might have filled around forty thousand modern printed pages. No doubt because of its length, most of it has been lost, but we still have over two thousand printed pages from it, including two nearly complete subjects and large parts of three more.[17] This monumental

[12] See especially the commentary in Jenkins et al., *Constantine* II. The compilers also used one of Theophanes' sources, the Greek translation of the chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa probably made by George Syncellus; see above, p. 68 and n. 118.

[13] Constantine's *De Ceremoniis* still needs a complete modern edition and commentary; see Michael McCormick in *ODB* I, pp. 595–97.

[14] See Constantine, *Three Treatises* (only the third of which seems to be Constantine's own work).

[15] Besides his apparently authentic speeches and letters, four minor works on relics have been attributed to Constantine on inconclusive grounds; see Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, pp. 313–15.

[16] On the *Excerpta*, see Németh, "Imperial Systematization," Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, pp. 323–32, Büttner-Wobst, "Anlage," de Boor, "Suidas" I and II, Schreiner, "Historikerhandschrift," and Flusin, "*Excerpta*."

[17] The usual view is that we have parts of just four subjects, counting "On Embassies" as one subject divided into parts on Roman and foreign embassies; but see pp. 157–58 and n. 20 below. Counting "On Embassies" as two subjects affects estimates of how much we still have of the original, which Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, pp. 324–25 (following Büttner-Wobst,

undertaking was apparently completed, because one of the subjects that remains is numbered 50, and if the compilers reached the fiftieth of their subjects they should have been able to reach the fifty-third. They probably also finished their task before Constantine died, because Romanus II seems to have abandoned his father's literary projects, leaving the *De Administrando Imperio*, *On Ceremonies*, and *On Imperial Expeditions* unfinished. Since the *Historical Excerpts* must have taken years to prepare, it was probably begun soon after 945 and completed not long before 959.[18]

The *Historical Excerpts* has a preface, or rather prefaces, which refer to Constantine in the third person, not in the first person like the prefaces to his treatises. The same preface was repeated for each of the subjects verbatim, except for strictly relevant variations. It explains that Constantine commissioned the *Excerpts* because over the course of time so much had been written about the past that readers were either unable to find it all or intimidated by its bulk. Accordingly the emperor ordered "books of every kind and many forms that were pregnant with knowledge to be collected from one place and another, everywhere in the whole world." Then, in order to make whatever was useful in this mass of literature generally accessible, Constantine had the books' contents arranged according to these "fifty-three different subjects, in and through which all the great deeds of history are included." The preface then gives the title and number of the current subject and a numbered list of the authors excerpted for the current volume. In one copy a poem dedicated to Constantine VII follows the list of authors.[19]

Of the fifty-three subjects, we have the preface, list of authors, and almost the whole text of number 27, "On Embassies of the Romans to Foreigners." Then

"Anlage," p. 97), guessed may be a thirty-fifth. In the most recent edition, the nearly complete "On Embassies of the Romans" takes up 227 pages, the nearly complete "On Embassies of Foreigners" 371 pages, and the nearly complete first volume of "On Virtue and Vice" 768 pages. Büttner-Wobst, "Anlage," p. 97, reckons that our MS of the first volume of "On Virtue" is about 90 percent complete (666 of 730 to 740 MS pages). Though we cannot easily calculate how much is missing from the other two parts because the MSS were destroyed in a fire at the Escorial, we may guess that they too have lost around 10 percent of their original lengths. If we add 10 percent to each of these numbers and double the number for "On Virtue" to allow for the missing second volume, the average for the three subjects comes to about 782 printed pages, for a conjectural total for all fifty-three subjects of about 41,500 pages. Everything still preserved amounts to 2,046 pages, about a twentieth of the estimated total. Such an estimate cannot, however, be more than a rough guideline, since the subjects varied so much in length. See Németh, "Imperial Systematization," pp. 103–45 for a reexamination of the MSS, and pp. 145–77 for the possibility that another MS (*Par. Suppl. gr.* 607) preserves a rough draft of the "On Sieges" conjectured to have been a subject of the *Excerpta*.

18 Németh, "Imperial Systematization," pp. 93–101, plausibly conjectures that Basil Lecapenus had some of the volumes copied after 949 and speculates somewhat less plausibly that Basil continued the original project after 949.

19 For the preface, see Constantine, *Excerpta* I.1 ("On Embassies of the Romans"), pp. 1–2 (without the poem), = II ("On Virtue and Vice"), pp. 1–2 (with the poem on p. 3). Németh, "Imperial Systematization," pp. 180–97, provides a new edition, translation, and commentary for both the preface and the poem.

we seem to have nearly all the text but not the preface or list of authors of "On Embassies of Foreigners to the Romans," which since it follows number 27 in the same manuscripts should be number 28. We also have the preface and dedicatory poem of number 50, "On Virtue and Vice," but only the list of authors and the nearly complete text of the first of two volumes on that subject.[20] We possess damaged texts, without prefaces, lists of authors, or subject numbers, of "On Plots against Monarchs" and "On Proverbial Teachings." Each of these five collections includes relevant excerpts, most fairly short but some very long, from each author under his own heading, presenting the excerpts in the order in which they appeared in the original text. If necessary, the compiler adds a few words at the beginning of the excerpt to explain its context. Sometimes the compiler specifies from which book of the history the excerpt comes (e.g., "From the History of Polybius, Book I"). Occasionally the compiler gives a cross-reference to another subject that included more material from the same author (e.g., "See in 'On Stratagems'"), thus telling us the titles (but not the numbers) of twenty-one of the subjects that we now lack.

Besides these parts of the *Historical Excerpts*, we seem to have one of the manuscripts that was used and marked by Constantine's excerptors, containing the history of Theophylact Simocatta and its continuation by the patriarch Nicephorus.[21] The markings correspond to many though not all of the selections from Theophylact in our texts of "On Proverbial Teachings," "On Embassies of the Romans to Foreigners," and "On Embassies of Foreigners to the Romans." (No selections from Theophylact are preserved in our incomplete texts of "On Virtue and Vice" and "On Plots against Monarchs.") Only six passages are marked in Nicephorus' history, from which no selections appear in the preserved parts of the *Excerpts*. While many of the passages marked in the texts of Theophylact and Nicephorus fit well under some of the subject titles we know from cross-references, others do not. Those that fit none of the known titles have been plausibly assigned to eleven additional conjectural subjects.[22] In sum, if we include one more title conjectured from the text of the *Suda* (which we shall see used the

[20] Flusin, "*Excerpta*," p. 542 n. 18, also believes that "On Embassies" comprised two subjects rather than one. Note that Constantine, *Excerpta* I.1, p. 2.13–15, says that "On Embassies of the Romans to Foreigners" is subject number 27. The title, preface, subject number, and list of authors of "On Embassies of Foreigners to the Romans" has evidently disappeared in the lacuna at *Excerpta* I.2, p. 229. For "On Virtue and Vice," see the note at the end of the list of authors at *Excerpta* II.1, pp. 2–3, which shows that the list includes only the authors excerpted in the first of two volumes; the text we have includes only the authors listed for the first volume, ending with Dio Cassius (II.2, p. 407). Though the title of "On Virtue and Vice" is usually given by modern scholars as "On Virtues and Vices," the MSS consistently use the singular.

[21] This MS (*Vaticanus graecus* 977) is described and analyzed by Schreiner, "Historikerhandschrift."

[22] Schreiner, "Historikerhandschrift," pp. 21–23. The titles would be (approximately) "On Coronations of Monarchs," "On Deaths of Monarchs," "On Prophecies," "On Offices," "On Punishments," "On Celebrations," "On Causes of Wars," "On Sieges," "On Fortresses," "On Disasters," and "On Natural Phenomena."

Excerpts), we may have titles for as many as thirty-eight of the original fifty-three subjects, though numbers for just four of them.[23]

The prefaces reveal that number 1 was "On Proclamations of Monarchs." It may have introduced a section on monarchy including the partly preserved "On Plots against Monarchs," the conjectural "On Coronations of Monarchs" and "On Deaths of Monarchs," and the lost but attested "On Successions of Monarchs" and "On Caesars" (apparently meaning early Roman emperors).[24] Evidently Constantine VII and his compilers thought that monarchy deserved pride of place. Perhaps they assigned the next place to a section on warfare, with the lost but attested "On Battle," "On Brave Deeds," "On Stratagems," "On Victory," and "On Retreat and Defeat," and the conjectural "On Causes of Wars," "On Fortresses," and "On Sieges." Numbers 27 and 28, "On Embassies of the Romans to Foreigners" and "On Embassies of Foreigners to the Romans," both preserved, may have been part of a section on government along with the lost but attested "On Political Affairs," "On Ecclesiastical Affairs," "On Foundations of Cities," and "On Foreigners," with the conjectural "On Offices." The now fragmentary "On Proverbial Teachings" perhaps belonged to a section on literary genres along with the lost but attested "On Speeches," "On Epistles," and "On Epigrams," and the conjectural "On Descriptions." The partly preserved number 50, "On Virtue and Vice," may have belonged to a miscellaneous section at the end that included the lost but attested "On Customs," "On Hunting," "On Marriages," "On Paradoxes," and "On Who Discovered What," and the conjectural "On Celebrations," "On Disasters," "On Punishments," and "On Natural Phenomena."[25]

The surviving parts of the *Historical Excerpts* include selections from twenty-five authors. Though relatively short, this list is impressive for its chronological scope and inclusion of a number of works that must have been rare even in the tenth century. The *Excerpts* provides us with most of what we now have of Nicholas of Damascus, Dexippus, Eunapius, Priscus, Malchus, Peter the Patrician, Menander Protector, John of Antioch, and the novelist Jamblichus. The *Excerpts* also preserves otherwise lost parts of Polybius, Diodorus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Appian, Dio Cassius, and John Malalas, even if the excerptors' copies of the multivolume histories of Polybius, Dio, and Nicholas were themselves incomplete.[26] The other excerpted writers are Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Josephus, Arrian, Socrates of Constantinople, Zosimus, Procopius, Agathias, and George the

[23] The other Greek titles (including the conjectural title "On Descriptions") are conveniently listed by Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, pp. 327–28, following Büttner-Wobst, "Anlage," pp. 105–19, whose reconstruction of the original order of subjects is somewhat different from that suggested here.

[24] Constantine, *Excerpta* III ("On Plots"), p. 75, with the only cross-reference to "On Caesars," follows John of Antioch's account of the assassination of Julius Caesar. Schreiner, "Historikerhandschrift," p. 15, however, may be correct to think that this subject also included Byzantines given the rank of Caesar.

[25] This suggested organization is fairly similar to that of Németh, "Imperial Systematization," pp. 72–73, though the two reconstructions were prepared independently.

[26] See Büttner-Wobst, "Anlage," pp. 97–100.

Monk. A few additional authors are likely to have been excerpted in portions of the *Excerpts* that are now lost, which after all made up most of it.

Some entries in the *Suda* have been used to conjecture which other writers the *Historical Excerpts* originally included. While the *Suda* drew on several sources, it evidently copied many of its entries from existing parts of "On Virtue and Vice," "On Embassies of the Romans to Foreigners," and "On Embassies of Foreigners to the Romans," although not from "On Proverbial Teachings" or "On Plots against Monarchs." The *Suda* seems also to have copied entries from parts of "On Virtue and Vice" that are now lost and from three entirely lost subjects, two military (probably "On Stratagems" and "On Brave Deeds") and one ecclesiastical (perhaps "On Ecclesiastical Affairs"). These entries from the lost parts of the *Excerpts* apparently included several authors not found in the surviving parts. Of eight authors from the *Suda* whom modern scholars have assigned to the *Excerpts*, five seem likely to belong to it: Philostorgius, Sozomen, Theodoret, Nicephorus, and the Latin historian Eutropius in a Greek translation.[27]

Three more writers conjectured to have been in the *Historical Excerpts* are more dubious candidates: Candidus, Aelian, and Pausanias. Candidus, named only once in the *Suda*, was evidently an indirect source of John of Antioch, who because he cited many sources by name and is well represented in both the *Excerpts* and the *Suda* may well be the direct source of the citation of Candidus.[28] The over nine hundred quotations from Aelian's *On Providence* in the *Suda* are so numerous that if they came from the *Historical Excerpts* some would surely have appeared in what we have of it, especially "On Proverbial Teachings" and "On Plots."[29] The *Suda* appears rather to have taken these quotations directly from Aelian's text. Finally, the *Suda* seems to have taken most of its citations of Pausanias' *Description of Greece* from a lost anthology that dealt chiefly with oracles but may also have included other information. If so, this anthology was probably the source of the few quotations from Pausanias that some have hesitantly assigned to the *Excerpts*.[30] Moreover, Aelian and Pausanias were not historians, and though the preserved part of "On Proverbial Teachings" does include a few selections from the novelist Jamblichus, all the other writers in what we have of the *Excerpts* are historians.

That the other five authors in the *Suda* are missing from the directly preserved parts of the *Historical Excerpts* is easily explained. Presumably Nicephorus is absent because his brief text provided few excerpts, as we would assume from the mere half-dozen passages apparently marked in our manuscript for inclusion in

[27] See A. Adler, *Suidae Lexicon* I, pp. xix–xx, following the major studies of de Boor, "Suidas" I and especially "Suidas" II; cf. Németh, "Imperial Systematization," pp. 35–38 and 40–42.

[28] The sole explicit citation of Candidus is at *Suda* X 245; see the index in A. Adler, *Suidae Lexicon* V, p. 91 (including two other passages that may actually belong to Menander Protector and Malchus of Philadelphia). For Candidus as a source of John of Antioch (because John plagiarized Eustathius of Epiphania, who used Candidus directly), see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 311–20.

[29] Cf. the index in A. Adler, *Suidae Lexicon* V, pp. 40–43.

[30] See A. Adler, *Suidae Lexicon* I, p. xx.

the *Excerpts*. The short history of Eutropius cannot have been excerpted much either, especially because many of the passages derived from it in the *Suda* are likely to come from John of Antioch, who made extensive though indirect use of Eutropius.[31] Because the preserved part of the *Excerpts* has little to do with church history, Philostorgius, Sozomen, and Theodoret found no place in it, though their fellow church historian Socrates makes a brief appearance in "On Embassies of Foreigners to the Romans."[32] Otherwise church history seems to have been poorly represented even in the complete *Excerpts*, except in its section "On Ecclesiastical Affairs." Out of the twenty-five authors in the surviving parts of the *Excerpts*, all but two (Socrates and Jamblichus) appear under more than one of the five surviving subjects. Thus these twenty-five writers were probably the majority of those used in the *Excerpts* and were the great majority of the writers used extensively.[33] Perhaps the full number was only a little more than the thirty authors whose names we know.

Interestingly, Photius, who as a private citizen and recent exile in 845 should have had more trouble finding books than Constantine VII did, includes in his *Bibliotheca* about twenty-six historians apparently omitted from the *Historical Excerpts*, and omits just seven who appear there.[34] Since twenty of the historians found in the *Bibliotheca* but not in the *Excerpts* are lost today and must have been rare even in 845, Constantine's researchers may well have been unable to find some of them, if not all. Less easily explicable absences from the *Excerpts* include Xenophon's *Hellenica*, Plutarch, Herodian, Eusebius, Evagrius, George Syncellus,

[31] See the index in A. Adler, *Suidae Lexicon* V, pp. 82 (Eutropius, omitting fragments certainly from John of Antioch) and 89 (John of Antioch). John of Antioch knew Eutropius from Eustathius of Epiphania, who consulted Eutropius in the original Latin; see the discussion of Theophanes' use of John of Antioch above, pp. 70–73. De Boor, "Suidas" II, pp. 19–22, however, has demonstrated that at least one of the passages derived from Eutropius in the *Suda* cannot come from John of Antioch.

[32] Constantine, *Excerpta* I.2, pp. 387–90.

[33] Again, the authors are conveniently listed in Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, pp. 329–30.

[34] The historians not in the *Excerpta* who appear in the *Bibliotheca* are (including two biographers) Agatharchides (codd. 213, 250, now lost), Amyntianus (cod. 131, a biographer, now lost), Basil the Cilician (cod. 42, now lost), Candidus (cod. 79, now lost), Cephalion (cod. 68, now lost), Ctesias (cod. 72, now lost), Eusebius of Caesarea (cod. 27), Evagrius (cod. 29), Gelasius of Caesarea (cod. 89, now lost), Gelasius of Cyzicus (codd. 15, 88), Herodian (cod. 99), Hesychius of Miletus (cod. 69, now lost), John Diacrinomenus (cod. 41, now lost), John the Lydian (cod. 180), Julius Africanus (cod. 34, now lost), Justus of Tiberias (cod. 33, now lost), Memnon (cod. 224, now lost), Nonnosus (cod. 3, now lost), Olympiodorus of Thebes (cod. 80, now lost), Philip of Side (cod. 35, now lost), Phlegon of Tralles (cod. 97, now lost), Plutarch (cod. 245, a biographer), Praxagoras of Athens (cod. 62, now lost), Sergius Confessor (cod. 67, now lost), Theophanes of Byzantium (cod. 64, now lost), and Theopompus (cod. 176, now lost). This list omits Nicephorus (cod. 66), Philostorgius (cod. 40, now lost), Sozomen (cod. 30), and Theodoret (cod. 31), who probably appeared in the complete *Excerpta*. The historians in the *Excerpta* but not in the *Bibliotheca* are Agathias, Eutropius, John of Antioch (now lost), John Malalas, Menander Protector (now lost), Peter the Patrician (now lost), and Priscus (now lost)—plus George the Monk, who cannot really be considered an omission because he probably wrote after Photius compiled the *Bibliotheca*.

and Theophanes Confessor, because Constantine's researchers can scarcely have failed to find their books, all of which survive today in multiple manuscripts. While a few of these histories may have appeared in the lost parts of the *Excerpts*, most of them said enough about virtues, vices, plots, proverbs, or embassies that they should have been included in the parts we have. The omission of Theophanes, whom Constantine considered his relative and excerpted at length in *De Administrando Imperio*, is particularly puzzling.

Possibly Constantine considered Plutarch to be a biographer rather than an historian, though when Constantine commissioned histories of his own he had no objection to their mixing biography with history. Eusebius and Evagrius may perhaps have appeared in the lost section "On Ecclesiastical Affairs." Just conceivably, Constantine left out George Syncellus and Theophanes because they overlapped so much with George the Monk, whose history ended a little later than Theophanes' *Chronography*. Yet other historians who repeated each other were included, like John Malalas and John of Antioch, and Eunapius and Zosimus. If the criterion was usefulness, in what way were Dexippus, Eunapius, Malchus, or Jamblichus more useful than Plutarch, Eusebius, George Syncellus, or Theophanes? Some of the reasons for Constantine's selection remain utterly obscure. For example, the emperor may have included Jamblichus' novel simply because it was a favorite book of his.[35] The suspicion remains that Constantine's researchers worked in a haphazard manner, and even that the imperial library was so disorganized that they failed to find some of its relevant holdings.[36]

The prefaces of the *Historical Excerpts* imply that it contained nearly all the parts of these historians that the excerptors considered useful. The fifty-three subjects, a peculiar number that includes many broad categories, look as if they were meant to be comprehensive.[37] Duplication of excerpts from the same author was avoided by means of the cross-references. Duplication of parallel passages in two or more authors seems also to have been avoided by choosing just one of the

[35] Németh, "Imperial Systematization," pp. 48–49, thinks that George Syncellus, Theophanes, and Plutarch were omitted because their own systems of organization were already convenient to consult; but the organization of the *Parallel Lives* is by no means convenient to consult, and the chronological organization of George Syncellus and Theophanes is shared by most of the historians included in the *Excerpts*. Kaldellis, "Byzantine Role," p. 83, referring only to the pre-Byzantine historians in the *Excerpts*, remarks, "This selection was, of course, precisely designed to project the court's view of history"; but this assumption, already dubious for the pre-Byzantine selection (because it cannot explain the omission of Plutarch and Xenophon's *Hellenica* or the inclusion of Jamblichus), seems impossible to sustain for the Byzantine selection.

[36] See p. 335 below on other authors' failure to find different books in the imperial library.

[37] Németh, "Imperial Systematization," pp. 65–72, argues that the number of fifty-three subjects was deliberately chosen as (1) the number of years during which the Romans won their empire according to Polybius and (2) a "special prime" number because it is "the sum of five consecutive primes (5+7+11+13+17)"; but we would expect to find either or both of these facts mentioned in the preface if we were supposed to notice them. At least as likely is that the excerptors started with fifty subjects and eventually decided they needed three more.

passages each time; thus the *Excerpts* seldom if ever has parallel excerpts from both Eunapius and Zosimus and from both John Malalas and John of Antioch.[38] As the excerptors read through the chosen books marking passages to be excerpted, new subjects could have been added to cover anything that failed to fit the original list of subjects. Subjects like "On Virtue and Vice" and "On Customs" could be quite elastic, and the excerptors were ready to use odd subjects like "On Paradoxes" and "On Who Discovered What."

The prefaces of the *Historical Excerpts* imply Constantine's reason for commissioning it: before the invention of indexes, finding anything specific in histories was difficult even if one remembered having read it, and almost impossible if one did not. The *Historical Excerpts* made this task easier, though not nearly as easy as it could have been if more thought had been given to the work's format. For one thing, the excerptors should have made clear for all the excerpts, and not only for some, in which book of the original work they appeared. The cross-references to other subjects should also have specified their subject number, even if a master list of all fifty-three subjects appeared in the first or last volume.[39] Moreover, the historians should have been listed under each subject in alphabetical order, as in Byzantine lexicons, or at least in chronological order; instead, the order differs for each of the five subjects we have and never follows any obvious plan.[40] One of the uses Constantine intended for the *Excerpts* was probably to have his secretaries find appropriate quotations in it to adorn his speeches, letters, and treatises. If so, saving his underlings' time when they referred to it would have been of little concern to him.

Of course the staggering length of the *Historical Excerpts* made it unlikely that anyone but the emperor or a few wealthy collectors or institutions could own a complete set. Constantine probably granted some scholars access to the original copy of the *Excerpts* and to the books from which it had been compiled. We know that he added a room for the imperial library in the Sacred Palace, where the collection was presumably kept. Yet at least some partial copies of the *Excerpts* must have been made, or we would have nothing of it today, since none of our manuscripts seems to come from the imperial library itself. [41] Because embassies and

[38] See Németh, "Imperial Systematization," p. 45, on this avoidance of duplication.

[39] Németh, "Imperial Systematization," pp. 207–14, notes that the cross-references would have been very difficult to use and argues persuasively that, like many other marginal notes, they were meant for the original compilers rather than for users.

[40] Büttner-Wobst, "Anlage," pp. 92–93, thinks that the list for the first volume of "On Virtue" is divided into sections for world historians, Greek historians, and earlier Roman historians, and that the second volume would have contained later Roman historians. Even if this is right, the order within these sections seems to be arbitrary (except that it would be chronological for the four Greek historians), and the other four extant subjects show no such plan. The overall order is actually arbitrary, with an occasional chronological bias. Cf. Németh, "Imperial Systematization," pp. 202–5.

[41] *Theophanes Continuatus* III.43 (p. 145.6–9); cf. Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, pp. 311–12 and n. 9, and Németh, "Imperial Systematization," pp. 93–101, who discusses both the imperial library and early copies of the *Excerpts* that were quite possibly made for Basil Lecapenus.

conspiracies were probably of less interest to private bibliophiles than to emperors, our manuscripts for those subjects may well come from the master copy. The subject "On Virtue and Vice" was perhaps of more general interest, especially for those who wanted to show off their learning in letters or speeches. The compiler of the *Suda* had that section, but he also had the two on embassies, along with three lost sections.

According to the prefaces, Constantine commissioned and planned the *Historical Excerpts* himself. This appears plausible, since the plan is quite idiosyncratic. Constantine may therefore be considered the compilation's editor in chief, a position that even today can be more or less honorary. For the emperor to write the preface in his own name was unnecessary and arguably inappropriate, because no one imagined that he had done any of the actual labor of reading, excerpting, compiling, and copying. A marginal note in one manuscript appears to tell us the name of the subeditor of "On Embassies of the Romans to Foreigners": "The one who has compiled the present volume is Theodosius the Younger."[42] Presumably the whole compilation was prepared by a group of several subeditors, who were probably well-trained secretaries rather than well-educated scholars. The emperor may, however, have visited the imperial library every now and then to check on the progress of his grandiose project.

In content, though not in arrangement, the *Historical Excerpts* was not enormously different from a comprehensive world history like those of Ephorus, Diodorus, Eustathius of Epiphania, or George Syncellus and Theophanes. Had the emperor wished, he could easily have commissioned several scholars to combine and paraphrase the writings of these thirty-odd historians (and one novelist) into an enormous history from the Creation to the ninth century. Yet Constantine apparently realized that such a history would be of very limited use, adding nothing to actual knowledge and overwhelming potential readers. Moreover, as a good antiquarian who liked to quote original sources, he had no wish to supersede the competent histories that already existed. Instead he made an effort to organize them that was creditable in theory, if somewhat less laudable in execution. Given the rarity of some of these histories even in his own time, he may also have suspected that his work might later preserve texts that would otherwise be lost.

The histories selected for the *Historical Excerpts* ended with the ninth century, because in Constantine's opinion no one had written a satisfactory history since Theophanes at the earliest, or George the Monk at the latest. To record the period between 813 and 886, Constantine then commissioned the *Life of Basil*, the four books *On Imperial Reigns* by Genesius, and the first four books of the composition now known as *Theophanes Continuatus*. Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus* extend from 813 to 867, thus leading up to the reign of Basil I (867–82) that was covered by the *Life of Basil*, which is sometimes called Book V of *Theophanes*

[42] See de Boor's preface in Constantine, *Excerpta* I.1, p. x, and Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, p. 329. This seems the obvious interpretation of the note, though Németh, "Imperial Systematization," pp. 140–41 and 235–36, believes that Theodosius the Younger may simply have been the copyist of our MS.

Continuatus. How these histories developed and when they were composed can only be conjectured, and their relative chronology is clearer than their absolute dates.

Constantine's preface to the *Life of Basil* indicates that it was written after Constantine took power, in 945, but at a time when no history had yet described Basil I's origins. Since the fourth books of both Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus* do this, they must be later than the *Life of Basil*. Genesius' history ought to have come next, because Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus* were evidently meant to replace it. All these works were evidently finished before Constantine's death, in 959. Therefore, despite what one might assume from the present order of books in our manuscript of *Theophanes Continuatus*, Constantine seems to have commissioned first the *Life of Basil*, then Genesius' *On Imperial Reigns*, and finally Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus*. If we allow enough time for each of these works to be composed, the dates of completion would be around 950 for the *Life of Basil*, around 954 for Genesius, and around 958 for Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus*.

The *Life of Basil*

The *Life of Basil*, something of an anomaly in Byzantine historiography, poses several problems.[43] Its full title is *Historical Narrative of the Life and Deeds of Basil, the Glorious Emperor, Which His Grandson Constantine, Emperor of the Romans by the Grace of God, Having Studiously Collected It from Various Narrations, Contributed to the Author*. The author's identity remains uncertain, though we shall see that it can be guessed with some probability. The work's sources are also somewhat obscure, if again not beyond conjecture. Even the genre of the *Life of Basil* is ambiguous, because it combines certain characteristics of history, biography, panegyric, and hagiography, without being any of these consistently. In its unique and hybrid character it resembles Eusebius of Caesarea's *Life of Constantine,* but in other respects Eusebius' work has little in common with the *Life of Basil* and cannot have served as its model. Though Genesius' *On Imperial Reigns* and Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus* must have been written to complement the *Life of Basil*, both are more conventional histories than the life is. Although none of these three works appears to have found many readers, later they became sources of the more popular histories of John Scylitzes and George Cedrenus.

The preface of the *Life of Basil*, ostensibly written by Constantine VII in the first person singular, implies that he wrote the work himself. According to its title, however, the emperor only collected materials for the life, leaving the actual writing to someone else simply called "the author." The apparent

[43] On the *Life of Basil*, see Ševčenko, *Chronographiae ... liber*, pp. 3*–55* (chiefly by Cyril Mango), Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 137–44, Van Hoof, "Among Christian Emperors," Alexander, "Secular Biography," and *PmbZ* II, *Prolegomena*, pp. 1–2. Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* II, pp. 345–66, and Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 339–43, consider the *Life of Basil* part of *Theophanes Continuatus*.

contradiction between title and preface could in theory be reconciled by supposing that the emperor assembled the material for the life in a rough draft that included the preface and then the author revised what the emperor had prepared. Yet this cannot have been more than a pretense. If Constantine had made any significant contribution to the life, he would surely have left the work of research to others, as he did for the *Historical Excerpts*, then done some or all of the writing himself, perhaps soliciting help with his style from someone with a better education than his own. Under such circumstances, Constantine, not the researchers or editor, would have called himself the author, and with reason. The emperor probably did compose the brief preface, which shows verbal resemblances to parts of *On Ceremonies*, *De Administrando Imperio*, and other writings that seem to be his.[44] The emperor probably also ordered some relevant source material to be collected and delivered to the designated writer. Yet the rest of the writing was evidently done by the author, who was someone other than Constantine. In fact, a passage midway in the life refers to Constantine in the third person.[45]

The preface to the *Life of Basil* declares that its author, purportedly Constantine, had for some time wanted to write a detailed history "of the entire period of Roman rule in Byzantium," beginning with the foundation of Constantinople in 324 and including all the noteworthy acts of later emperors and their officers and officials. This project had, however, proved to be impossible, because the author lacked the necessary books and the required leisure from his official duties. He therefore decided to limit himself for the present to the life of a single emperor, Basil I the Macedonian, as the founder of the present dynasty and a ruler who could serve "for his descendants as a model taken from their own house." If, however, Constantine should be permitted to live longer without being hampered by his various ailments, he still hoped to compose "the whole narration of the history of [Basil's] offspring extending down to ourselves": that is, the reigns of Leo VI, Alexander, and Constantine himself up to the time of writing. Yet Basil's priority in time cannot entirely explain why Constantine chose to begin with an emperor he had never known and must at least have suspected was not his real grandfather, while nonetheless never finding time to commission a biography of his father, Leo. Perhaps Constantine was reluctant to revisit the vexed questions of his birth out of wedlock and his parents' bitterly contested marriage.

[44] See Ševčenko's apparatus to *Life of Basil* 1.

[45] See *Life of Basil* 48, remarking of Basil's unsuccessful siege of the Arab city of Adata: "For even though [Basil] was unable to capture the city then, now in our times Constantine, born in the purple, the son of Leo the most wise and the grandson of that man [Basil], achieved that success and claimed the accomplishment of the total destruction of those inhabiting Adata." Cf. Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* II.1, pp. 87–94 (Basil's failed siege, probably in 879), 317–18 (the destruction of Adata under Constantine VII in 948), and 361 (a second destruction of Adata in 957, which can hardly be the one mentioned in the *Life of Basil*, both because its author would presumably have referred to both destructions if the second had then occurred and because the life appears on other grounds to have been written around 950).

This preface presumably describes what Constantine wanted the *Life of Basil* to be: a history of all Basil's noteworthy acts that could serve as examples for future emperors, much as *De Administrando Imperio*, *On Ceremonies*, and *On Imperial Expeditions* were meant to guide Romanus II and his successors on specific topics. When Constantine says that he lacked the books he needed to compose a detailed history of the period from Constantine I to Basil, he can scarcely mean that the resources of an emperor were inadequate to acquire copies of books that he knew existed. Instead, he probably meant that he had surmised, perhaps from the research his assistants had already done for the *Historical Excerpts*, that the existing sources for most of the period from Constantine I to Basil were inadequate for the sort of detailed and edifying history that he wanted written. Certainly our sources for most of the earlier Byzantine period leave much to be desired, and even Constantine VII would not have had much better sources for most of it than we do. For example, Theophanes' *Chronography* never depicts an emperor in nearly as much detail as the *Life of Basil* does. Though even Basil's reign was fading from living memory by 950, some sixty-five years after his death, fairly detailed written sources remained for it.

If we leave aside the preface, the author of the *Life of Basil* seems to have consulted five sources, all lost to us in their original form. The first evidently traced Basil's genealogy back to Tiridates, an Arsacid king of Armenia in the first Christian century. While Basil's family does seem to have been Armenian, even the *Life of Basil* admits that they were peasants. Their descent from the Arsacid kings of Armenia was obviously a learned fiction designed to flatter Basil. According to both Nicetas the Paphlagonian's *Life of Ignatius* and Pseudo-Symeon (probably copying Nicetas' *Secret History*), after Photius was deposed as patriarch in 867 he fabricated just such a genealogy for Basil in a counterfeit ancient book, prophesying that a family descended from Tiridates would produce a dynast named Beclas. Photius had a friend of his reveal the forged prophecy to Basil and recommend Photius to interpret it. After Photius explained that it referred to Basil, his wife, and his sons, the gratified emperor recalled the former patriarch and made him tutor to the imperial princes. In all probability, Photius borrowed the idea of forging and interpreting such a prophecy from Patriarch Methodius, who had employed a similar ruse to induce the emperor Theophilus to recall him from exile.[46] Photius' forged prophecy is presumably the source of the genealogy given in some detail in the *Life of Basil* (and mentioned briefly by Genesius).[47]

Second, the *Life of Basil* apparently drew on an encomium of Basil, but not the encomiastic oration we know by Basil's successor and supposed son, Leo VI.[48] Despite the identical subjects and similar purposes of the two texts, no parallels

[46] Nicetas the Paphlagonian, *Life of Ignatius* 565C–568C; Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 689.5–690.3. For the relation of this prophecy to that of Methodius for Theophilus, see Treadgold, "Prophecies," especially pp. 234–37.

[47] *Life of Basil* 2–3; Genesius IV.24.

[48] On this encomium, see also Mango in Ševčenko, *Chronographiae ... liber*, pp. 10*–11*.

of language or content indicate dependence of the *Life of Basil* on Leo's oration.[49] While both texts, evidently following Photius, say that Basil was of Arsacid descent, the life traces his ancestors to Arsaces of Parthia, whom the oration never mentions, whereas the oration traces them to Artaxerxes of Persia, whom the life never mentions.[50] Although both texts say that when Basil first came to Constantinople he fell asleep at the Monastery of St. Diomedes, the oration says that he slept on the floor of the church and dreamed that the saint predicted he would be emperor, whereas the life says that he slept outside the church until the abbot dreamed that St. Diomedes ordered him to admit Basil as a future emperor.[51] Leo's oration includes information that is absent from the life, particularly on Basil's marriage to Eudocia Ingerina and his dedicating his son Stephen to the Church.[52] On the other hand, the lost encomium used by the life seems to have included several more prophecies of Basil's rule and much more about Basil's virtues, exploits, and benefactions than Leo's oration did. Because this lost encomium was more detailed and more favorable to Basil, it may have been commissioned (or even composed) by Leo's successor, Alexander, who was Basil's real son, as Leo probably was not.

Third, the author of the *Life of Basil* evidently consulted the lost *Secret History* of Nicetas the Paphlagonian, discussed in the preceding chapter.[53] The information taken from Nicetas' *Secret History* can be identified from the parallels of content between the life and the chronicle of Symeon the Logothete, who used the lost History of Basil and Leo that Nicetas also used, and from parallels of both style and content between the life and Genesius' *On Imperial Reigns*, Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus*, and Pseudo-Symeon, who used Nicetas directly. The life seems to include practically all the information about Basil that was in Nicetas' history, except for the substantial parts that reflected badly on Basil, Leo, or Photius, which were omitted for obvious reasons.

Fourth, the author of the *Life of Basil* seems to have personally inspected and described the many buildings built by Basil that were still standing at the time of writing. The writer also presumably had some sort of inventory to show him which buildings were built by Basil, but this inventory may well have formed part of the encomium, because imperial encomia customarily included the buildings the emperor had built if there were any.

Fifth, the *Life of Basil* appears to include material drawn from the imperial archives.[54] We shall see that a small part of the life overlaps with Constantine VII's

[49] The few parallels suggested by Alexander, "Secular Biography," pp. 206–7, are so remote that they actually undermine his case for any direct dependence of the life on the oration, though both life and oration presumably depended on Photius' forged genealogy.

[50] Cf. *Life of Basil* 2, with Leo VI, *Homily* 14, lines 126–39 (Vogt and Hausherr, "Oraison," 44.23–46.8).

[51] Cf. *Life of Basil* 9, with Leo VI, *Homily* 14, lines 229–37 (Vogt and Hausherr, "Oraison," 50.25–52.3).

[52] Leo VI, *Homily* 14, lines 270–79 and 438–63 (Vogt and Hausherr, "Oraison," 54.6–12 and 64.5–24).

[53] See above, pp. 146–51.

[54] See Mango in Ševčenko, *Chronographiae ... liber*, pp. 11*–12*.

De Administrando Imperio, apparently because the author of the life used the same archival material but not Constantine's treatise itself. Thus the reference in the title of the life to the sources "painstakingly collected" by Constantine VII probably means that the emperor gave his writer access to Photius' genealogy, the encomium of Basil, Nicetas' *Secret History*, Basil's buildings themselves, and the imperial archives. (If the material from Photius' genealogy was incorporated into the encomium, the number of direct sources would be reduced to four.) Whatever pains were taken in collecting these sources seem not to have been sufficient to locate Leo VI's oration on Basil—which must have been kept somewhere, because it survives in one manuscript today.

The possibility that the author used any more sources than these appears remote. Materials to write a new encomium of Basil would no longer have been available some sixty-five years after the emperor's death. Nor was such material likely to be found in any source other than an encomium of Basil, which nobody would have had a reason to compose between 913 and 945, during the turbulent regency for Constantine VII or the reign of Romanus I. The author of the *Life of Basil* could of course have written in praise of Basil without consulting any source, and a few passages of vague and vapid praise in the life do look like the writer's own work. Yet most of the writer's praise is more specific, and even when inaccurate seems to be based on unreliable sources rather than mere imagination. The following summary of the life will illustrate how the author seems as a rule to have paraphrased his sources in alternation rather than combining them with each other or additions of his own.

After the preface, which was probably composed by Constantine VII himself, the life opens with the genealogy forged by Photius describing Basil's Arsacid forebears, who settled around Adrianople. The life names several of Basil's ancestors, including his great-grandfather Leo and his grandfather Maïctes, but leaves Basil's father strangely nameless. The reason for this omission may well be that Photius' genealogy gave Basil's father only the name Beclas, which Photius had then interpreted not as a real name but as an acronym of Basil's family.[55] The author of the life omitted the acronym, which he knew was not the father's name, but apparently failed to find the actual name to insert instead. Although the writer could of course have mentioned the supposedly ancient genealogy and Photius' interpretation of it, he chose to use it without attribution as a source for Basil's family history. Probably the author realized Nicetas was right, that it was an invention, but felt unable to omit what by then had become the traditional genealogy of the Macedonian dynasty.

[55] *Life of Basil* 3. For Beclas as the name of Basil's father in Photius' genealogy, see Nicetas the Paphlagonian, *Life of Ignatius* 565D–568A. The unknown name of Basil's father (*PmbZ* I, no. 832A) may well have been Constantine, since this was the name of Basil's eldest son (*PmbZ* I, no. 4005), and eldest sons were often named for their paternal grandfathers. If so, when Basil's grandfather Maïctes left Armenia and settled in the empire under Constantine VI (*Life of Basil* 3), he apparently named his son for the reigning emperor.

The life continues with an account of Basil's childhood that may owe something to Photius' prophecy but seems to depend chiefly on the lost encomium. The life says that Basil and his parents were carried off soon after his birth (811) by the Bulgars after their sack of Adrianople (813) but soon returned to the empire when a peace treaty was made (816). By contrast, Symeon the Logothete, evidently drawing on the lost History of Basil and Leo, records that Basil returned to the empire only when he was twenty-five (hence in 836).[56] Probably the lost encomium of Basil preferred to have the future emperor spend just three years of his childhood outside the empire rather than almost his whole childhood and youth, as was actually the case. The encomium may also have been the source of further prophecies that Basil would become emperor, including one borrowed from Herodotus.[57]

The story of Basil's admission to the Monastery of St. Diomedes when he arrived in Constantinople seems to have come from the History of Basil and Leo by way of Nicetas' *Secret History*, though it could also have appeared in the lost encomium.[58] After this story, the encomium seems to be the source of still more prophecies of Basil's rule. The encomium probably also contributed the reports that Basil was befriended by a widow named Danelis at Patras and defeated a Bulgarian wrestler at a banquet given by the domestic of the Scholae Antigonus, son of the Caesar Bardas. Except for Basil's arrival at St. Diomedes, none of this appears in Symeon or Pseudo-Symeon, who say nothing about Danelis. While she was presumably an historical figure, Antigonus' banquet looks fictional, because it could scarcely have happened later than 859, when Antigonus was six years old and Bardas was not yet Caesar.[59] Apparently the lost encomium of Basil was not only embroidered with fictitious details, as encomia often were, but was written at a time when memories of the 850's were becoming unreliable, as they would have been under Alexander (912–13).

Next the life tells how Basil won Michael III's favor by taming a spirited horse. Since this story also appears in Symeon, the life seems to have taken it directly from Nicetas' *Secret History* and indirectly from the History of Basil and Leo, which dated it to 855.[60] The story begins a series of fifteen chapters in the life that seem

[56] Cf. *Life of Basil* 4, with Symeon I, 131.8–13, and Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 655.19–656.2. For the dates of Basil's birth, the treaty, and Basil's return, see Treadgold, "Bulgars' Treaty."

[57] Cf. *Life of Basil* 8, with Herodotus I.108 (Cyrus' mother dreams that a huge vine grows from her genitalia).

[58] Cf. *Life of Basil* 9, with p. 133 and n. 38 above.

[59] *Life of Basil* 10–12. (Cf. Ševčenko's apparatus on p. 40.) For Antigonus' birthdate (853/54), see *PmbZ* I, no. 503, and for Bardas' appointment as Caesar (862), see *PmbZ* I, no. 791. On Danelis, see Koutava-Delivoria, "Qui était Daniélis?" who convincingly disposes of the idea that Danelis was a fictional character. In fact, the author had no reason to refer to Danelis at all except to explain her visits to Constantinople and her bequest to Leo VI. Her story adds nothing much to Basil's credit, is unnecessary to explain his success, and raises the (possibly justified) suspicion that he had been her lover.

[60] Cf. *Life of Basil* 13, with Symeon I, 131.7 (Pseudo-Symeon, p. 655.7–18). In Symeon this chapter follows the marriage of Michael III to Eudocia Decapolitissa sometime in 855 (131.6) and precedes the assassination of Theoctistus, on November 20, 855 (131.19–21), leaving

to come mostly from Nicetas, because with one exception (which may well have been invented by the author of the life) all show at least some parallels with Symeon or Pseudo-Symeon.[61] The life also includes a sixth-century prophecy that an Arsacid would become emperor, which may come from Photius rather than Nicetas.[62] Moreover, the life sometimes gives a context and chronological order different from those copied by Symeon from the History of Basil and Leo, though we cannot be sure whether these were rearranged by the author of the life or by Nicetas. Thus after the story of Basil's taming the horse (855), the life mentions Leo the Philosopher's warning Bardas against Basil (866), Theodora's warning Michael III against Basil (855), and Michael's making Basil grand chamberlain and marrying him to Eudocia Ingerina (865/66).[63] Then the life follows Symeon's chronology in recounting the assassination of Bardas, Michael's adopting Basil and crowning him co-emperor, and the revolt and blinding of the generals Symbatius and Peganes.[64] The last eight chapters of this section, which describe Michael's increasingly erratic behavior up to his murder in 867, have only one parallel with Symeon but several with Pseudo-Symeon.[65] The life skims hastily over Michael's murder, attributing it to unnamed officials.

The author begins his account of Basil's reign alone with a section of vague, rhetorical, and laudatory chapters. These concern Basil's enthusiastic reception as emperor, his prudent financial measures, his excellent official appointments, his acts of justice to the poor and oppressed, his salutary church council (actually conflating the two councils of 867 and 869–70), his legislative reforms, his mercy to conspirators, his care for his children, and his military reforms. Most of this section presumably comes from the encomium of Basil and concerns his whole reign, like the story that "years later" he arrived at court to find no plaintiffs because nobody was suffering injustice.[66] The writer did so little to combine his sources in this section that he repeats the plot and punishment of Symbatius and Peganes, which he has already recorded under Michael III in 866, as if this were another event that happened under Basil after 867. The first time George Peganes is called only Peganes and the second time only George, and the second blinding

aside a "cast back" to Basil's earlier career (131.8–16) and two chapters evidently taken by Symeon from a source or sources different from the chronologically arranged History of Basil and Leo (131.17–18; see above, p. 128 and n. 21).

[61] The exception is *Life of Basil* 24; see Ševčenko's apparatus and below, p. 177 and n. 91.

[62] *Life of Basil* 19.35–50.

[63] Cf. *Life of Basil* 14, 15, and 16, with Symeon I, 131.34, 131.16, and 131.31–32 (Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 676.12–677.4, 657.1–6, and 675.4–19), respectively. At *Life of Basil* 16.24, Eudocia's name may have disappeared in a lacuna, because the copyist of *Vaticanus graecus* 167 often skipped letters, words, and phrases. Ševčenko's edition of the *Life of Basil* indicates more than sixty such lacunae in 102 chapters. The most lacunose chapter is *Life of Basil* 50, with eight omissions of varying importance, three of them left unfilled by the editor.

[64] Cf. *Life of Basil* 17–19, with Symeon I, 131.34–43 (Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 676.12–681.3).

[65] Cf. *Life of Basil* 20–23, 25, 26, and 27, with Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 661.12–664.4, 682.19–683.16 (and Symeon I, 131.46–49), 683.20–684.7, and 659.1–660.3, respectively.

[66] This section is *Life of Basil* 28–36, with 31.34–41 on the absence of injustice later in Basil's reign and 32 on the conflated church councils.

is attributed to Basil alone. Presumably the first, which Symeon includes, comes from Nicetas, while the second, which Symeon omits, comes from the encomium. Apparently the author was confused because the encomium praised Basil for rehabilitating the blinded Symbatius and Peganes after 867, whereas the life mentions this act of mercy under 866 with the remark "but these things were later."[67]

There follows a lengthy section on Basil's wars with the Paulician heretics and the Eastern Arabs, which seems also to derive from the lost encomium. Verbose, laudatory, vague, and confused, it shows no significant parallels with either Symeon or Pseudo-Symeon, who treat the subject in a few brief entries. First the life praises Basil's unsuccessful sieges of the Paulician stronghold of Tephrice and the Arab stronghold of Melitene, listing obscure places the Byzantines captured and concluding with Basil's triumphal reception in Constantinople by an unnamed patriarch (actually Ignatius). This report conflates two campaigns, one against Tephrice in 871 and the other against Melitene in 873. Next the life describes how an unnamed domestic of the Scholae (actually Christopher) defeated and killed the Paulician leader Chrysocheir and brought his head back to Basil (872). Then the life records the death of Patriarch Ignatius and his replacement by Photius (877) and the discovery of a plot by (Romanus) Curcuas (886). Next the life praises another campaign in which Basil took mostly obscure places and threatened Germanicea and Adata before returning in triumph to an unnamed patriarch (actually Photius). This campaign probably occurred in 879 and included the capture of Tephrice, though not by Basil himself. Finally the life, after vaguely referring to the destruction of Tephrice, describes a victory over the Arabs of Tarsus by Andrew the Scythian (878), Andrew's replacement by Cesta Stypiotes (883), and Stypiotes' defeat by the Arabs of Tarsus (883).[68] The confusion in this section may result from the writer's trying to convert a rambling list of victories in the encomium into a more orderly account. He inserts a whole chapter of apologies for the inadequacy of his information.[69]

The author then devotes a long section to Basil's achievements in the West. Since the encomium seems to have said little or nothing about these, the writer had to rely on archival sources and again on Nicetas' *Secret History*. This section begins with four chapters on warfare in Dalmatia and Italy (866–71) with the

[67] Cf. *Life of Basil* 19.1–29 (the first report, mentioning the rebels' later rehabilitation at 19.29–35) and 34.1–21 (the second report; see Ševčenko's apparatus), with Symeon I, 131.42–43. The writer fails to make clear whether he realizes that the Symbatius in the second report was the same as Bardas' son-in-law Symbatius in the first report.

[68] Cf. *Life of Basil* 37–51, with the discussions of these events in Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* II.1, pp. 32–49, 79–94, and 99–105, and Lemerle, "Histoire," pp. 96–108. Unfortunately, Lemerle erred by accepting the fabricated dates of Pseudo-Symeon together with the reliable account of Symeon, concluding that Symeon I, 132.15, dates Basil's campaign against Melitene to 876/77 and Symeon I, 132.17, dates Basil's campaign against Germanicea to 878/79. The former entry certainly refers to the campaign of 873, and the latter cannot be used to date the campaign against Melitene to 878 rather than 879, the date probably correctly preferred in Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* II.1, pp. 93–94.

[69] *Life of Basil* 47.

Arabs under the emir of Bari "Soldanus" (Sawdān), ending in the capture of both Bari and Soldanus by the Frankish emperor Louis II. Here the writer evidently rewrote in his own formal style an archival document that was excerpted in its original form for Constantine's *On the Themes* and *De Administrando Imperio*.[70] Then the writer adds, in a clearly labeled digression that is quite different in tone and mostly legendary, a story of how Soldanus escaped from captivity by tricking Louis and the local Lombards and almost took Capua. This tale appears in very similar formal Greek in both *De Administrando Imperio* and Pseudo-Symeon, showing that its source was the formal *Secret History* of Nicetas, not an unedited archival document.[71]

Next the author of the life seems to draw on the archives for three chapters about Arab sea raids on Greece, which neither he nor we can date with any precision. The first account, describing a raid by Emir Esman (Yāzmān) of Tarsus that was repelled by Oeniates the commander of Hellas, may derive from an official dispatch by Oeniates, especially because it wrongly claims that Esman was killed.[72] The next two chapters, on raids by Emir Saēt (Saʿīd?) of Crete (with a mysterious Photius) that were defeated by the commander of the Imperial Fleet Nicetas Oöryphas, may derive from a dispatch by Oöryphas.[73] Then the last ten chapters of the section on Basil's Western wars, which are almost in chronological order, seem to depend on Nicetas, because besides parallels of content with Symeon they have parallels of both style and content with Genesius that show Nicetas' characteristic interest in etymologies and prophecies. First the life records defeats of the Arabs near Methone and on Sicily by the commander of the Fleet Nasar (880).[74] The life then continues with defeats of the Arabs in Italy by Nasar and the general Leo Apostypes, though the emperor exiled Apostypes for letting his colleague Procopius be defeated and killed; a digression describes Apostypes'

[70] Cf. *Life of Basil* 52–55, with Constantine, *De Administrando Imperio* 29.56–79 and 29. 100–119, and Constantine, *De Thematibus* II.11.18–44 (and *Theophanes Continuatus* II.28). On these campaigns, see Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* II.1, pp. 10–21.

[71] Cf. *Life of Basil* 56–58, with Constantine, *De Administrando Imperio* 29.119–216, and Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 694.17–697.2. (On p. 694.20, note Pseudo-Symeon's blunder in calling Bari "the great city of the Ragusans," which shows that he—and presumably Nicetas—had not seen the account of the siege of Ragusa in Dalmatia in the archival report.) Jenkins et al., *Constantine* II, p. 102, describe the ultimate source of the digression as "Lombard tales." I believe that the sources for this episode postulated by Ševčenko, "Re-reading," p. 191 and n. 60, were actually used in Nicetas the Paphlagonian's *Secret History*, which was then used for the life.

[72] *Life of Basil* 59; cf. Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* II.1, p. 56 and n. 1. The life seems to misdate this raid around 872, though it must have occurred between 882/83 (when Yāzmān became emir) and 886 (Basil's death). Perhaps the writer discovered an account in an archival document without a date or a datable context and had simply to guess where to insert it.

[73] *Life of Basil* 60–61; cf. Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* II.1, pp. 53–55, who suggest a date of 873 that is little more than a guess, since, as they practically admit, the dates given by George Sphrantzes (or rather Pseudo-Sphrantzes; cf. *ODB* II, pp. 1335–36, and III, p. 1937) are worthless. The source again seems to have been a report lacking a date or datable context.

[74] Cf. *Life of Basil* 62–64, with Genesius IV.34.1–51 (an etymology and a prophecy); see also Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* II.1, pp. 96–98.

later mutilation for treason.[75] Next come abortive Arab plans for a naval attack (877/78) and the Arab conquest of Syracuse (878), which according to Nicetas was reported to the Byzantines by demons.[76] The section ends with victories over the Arabs in Calabria by Nicephorus Phocas (grandfather of the future emperor Nicephorus II) and a reference to Nicephorus' later exploits under Leo VI, which the writer probably took from Nicetas.[77]

Then the writer apparently returns to the encomium, vaguely eulogizing Basil's love of history, hagiography, priests, monks, and the poor, and his justice and piety in general.[78] The life goes on to describe Basil's munificence to two people who had helped him before he became emperor, the abbot of the Monastery of St. Diomedes and the widow Danelis. Then the life appends a long account of Danelis' two visits from the Peloponnesus to Constantinople, the first during Basil's reign and the second under Leo VI. Here the source still seems to be the encomium and not Nicetas, who to judge from Symeon and Pseudo-Symeon said nothing about Danelis but mentioned promotions of the abbot and his brothers to high office that the life omits. If so, the references to Danelis' later death and Leo's measures to carry out the provisions of her will are further signs that the encomium was composed some years after Basil's death.[79]

Next come seventeen chapters on Basil's construction and restoration of churches and other buildings, many of them in the palace and almost all in Constantinople. Though much of this section must be based on firsthand observation of the buildings, it must also depend on a detailed register of Basil's construction projects. That this register formed part of the encomium seems likely not just because the description is full of praise for Basil but because the chapters on buildings in the life both follow and precede sections that seem to come from the encomium. The next five chapters concern Basil's efforts to convert the Jews, Bulgars, and Rus', his admirably stoic acceptance of the death of his eldest son, Constantine, and his refusal to order a new census for fear that it would be used for oppressive taxation. All this is told in terms suitable for an encomium, particularly because according to Symeon Basil was actually prostrated by Constantine's death and according to Pseudo-Symeon (and presumably Nicetas) he had Theodore Santabarenus conjure up Constantine's ghost.[80]

The last three chapters of the life seem, however, to be based once more on Nicetas' *Secret History*. The first tells how Santabarenus advised Prince Leo to

[75] Cf. *Life of Basil* 65–67, with Genesius IV.32 and Symeon I, 132.20; see also Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* II.1, pp. 98 and 109.

[76] Cf. *Life of Basil* 68–70, with Genesius IV.33 (etymologies) and Symeon I, 132.12; see also Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* II.1, pp. 70–79.

[77] *Life of Basil* 71; cf. Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* II.1, pp. 110–12.

[78] *Life of Basil* 72, which John Scylitzes, who usually follows the life closely, entirely omits, evidently because of its vapidity.

[79] *Life of Basil* 73–77; cf. Symeon I, 132.11, and Pseudo-Symeon, p. 691.10–14 (on the abbot and his brothers).

[80] *Life of Basil* 78–94 (Basil's buildings) and 95–99, with 98 on the death of Constantine. (Cf. Symeon I, 132.18, and Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 692.14–17 and 692.20–693.11.)

carry a dagger and then slanderously charged him with planning to use it to murder Basil, tricking the emperor into imprisoning Leo. The next chapter relates how Basil released Leo on the advice of his officials, after a pet parrot cried out at a state banquet, "Ai! Ai! Lord Leo!" The final chapter records Basil's death, mentioning his hunting accident but suppressing its suspicious circumstances. All three chapters show parallels with Symeon, Pseudo-Symeon, or the *Life of Euthymius* that indicate their ultimate dependence on Nicetas' *Secret History*, though of course the *Life of Basil* shows Basil in a more favorable light than Nicetas evidently had.[81] Applying to Basil a Homeric quotation that he was "both a noble king and a strong spearman" (*Iliad* III.179), the author brings his work to a close.

Thus the *Life of Basil* appears to consist mostly of alternating borrowings from the lost encomium of Basil and from the *Secret History* of Nicetas the Paphlagonian. After the preface, the life has six main sections: on Basil's youth and the omens of his future greatness (from the encomium and Photius), on Basil's rise to power (from Nicetas and perhaps Photius), on Basil's accession and wars in the East (from the encomium), on Basil's wars in the West (from Nicetas and the archives), on Basil's domestic measures and buildings (from the writer's inspection of the buildings and probably the encomium), and on Basil's last years and death (from Nicetas).[82] The writer scarcely ever uses more than one or two sources in each section, though surely he could sometimes have found supplementary material in another source—for example, in Nicetas' treatment of Basil's wars in the East.

All these sources are lost in their original form, but textual similarities between the life and Pseudo-Symeon are often unmistakable, though Pseudo-Symeon must himself have summarized Nicetas' original text. Only by comparing the life with the archival documents copied into *De Administrando Imperio* can we see our author converting simple Greek into a higher style. He must have copied the reasonably high style of Nicetas, and presumably of the encomium, fairly closely. Yet he probably also smoothed out the reportedly harsh and careless features of the style of the *Secret History*.[83] Among works that evidently drew on Nicetas, the life and the first four books of *Theophanes Continuatus* are written in a more felicitous and careful style than that of Genesius or Pseudo-Symeon, evidently because the former improved Nicetas' style and the latter did not. Nonetheless, the life is rambling and verbose. Despite its length, it gives no clear idea of Basil's character or personality or even his appearance, though Nicetas seems to have described it and several portraits of the emperor surely existed.[84]

[81] Cf. *Life of Basil* 100–102, with Symeon I, 132.23 and 132.27, Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 697. 2–699.8 and 699.16–700.5, and *Life of Euthymius* 1.

[82] These sections seem to be, respectively, *Life of Basil* 2–12, 13–27, 28–51, 52–71, 72–99, and 100–102.

[83] See above, pp. 135–36, 138–39, and 150–51.

[84] See below, p. 213 and n. 55, citing Symeon in Istrin, *Хроника* II, p. 24, and Pseudo-Symeon, p. 686.12–16. Note that this description of Basil's appearance is flattering, making its omission from the life especially puzzling.

The work's composition is mechanical and uninspired, and its author shows little talent as an historian.

Unless the foregoing analysis is utterly mistaken, the *Life of Basil* is less an experiment in biography combining features of an encomium and a history than a rather perfunctory combination of two main sources, one an encomium and the other a history. If so, stylistic comparisons are of limited use for identifying the author of the *Life of Basil*, because most of its text is a pastiche of material taken from earlier writers, including Nicetas the Paphlagonian and the unknown encomiast of Basil. Even many of the literary allusions in the life are probably borrowed from the well-educated Nicetas, like some verses from Euripides attributed to Michael III that are paralleled in Pseudo-Symeon.[85] Yet the author of the life must have been a learned man, who apparently used the Constantinian *Historical Excerpts* and may have helped compile it.[86] For example, since one of two likely borrowings from Procopius' "Vandal War" is inserted in a passage seemingly drawn from the encomium, and the other is introduced in a passage seemingly drawn from Nicetas, the allusions may plausibly be assigned to the author of the life rather than to either of his sources.[87]

Another line of argument than stylistic analysis may be more helpful for identifying the author of the life. John Scylitzes makes extensive use of both the *Life of Basil* and Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus*, often following them so closely that lacunae and corruptions in their texts can be corrected or completed from his. We have also seen that in his preface Scylitzes lists and criticizes the historians who had written since Theophanes Confessor. First he gives two examples, though not a complete list, of "useless" chroniclers who merely catalogued the emperors without giving a detailed record of events. Such histories obviously could not include the *Life of Basil* or *Theophanes Continuatus*, because they were very detailed and far from useless to Scylitzes, who summarized them extensively. Then he gives a list of ten other historians, in which he seems to have included every historian he had consulted who was not "useless."[88] Although Scylitzes cannot have known every historian who had written since Theophanes—for example, he omits Sergius Confessor—he certainly knew and used the *Life of Basil* and *Theophanes Continuatus* and should therefore have mentioned their author or authors.

Scylitzes' list of ten historians starts with "Theodore Daphnopates, Nicetas the Paphlagonian, [and] Joseph Genesius," and his description of their works begins,

85 Cf. *Life of Basil* 25.17–21 (and Ševčenko's apparatus), with Pseudo-Symeon, p. 683.11–14 (slightly abridged).

86 See Ševčenko's index to the *Life of Basil*, p. 479, citing twenty-three apparent parallels; and since the author presumably had access to more of the *Excerpta* than we do (even if it was still in progress when he wrote), he probably relied on the *Excerpta* for many of the parallels with historians cited elsewhere in Ševčenko's index.

87 Cf. *Life of Basil* 5 and 17.36–41, with Procopius, *Wars* III.4.5–9 and IV.28.23 (the latter not noted in Ševčenko's apparatus).

88 Scylitzes' preface is discussed further on pp. 332–35 below.

"the one tends to expound the praise of an emperor, the other the denunciation of a patriarch, and the next the encomium of one dear to him. …"[89] "The praise of an emperor" could easily refer to the *Life of Basil*, "the denunciation of a patriarch" to Nicetas' *Secret History* with its defamation of Photius, and "the encomium of one dear to him" to Genesius' *On Imperial Reigns*, if Scylitzes or his source noticed the inordinate prominence it gave to Genesius' ancestor Constantine Maniaces. Since Constantine VII is absent from this list, Scylitzes cannot have considered him to be the author of the *Life of Basil*. If Scylitzes had not known the name of its author, he would presumably have substituted a description, as he did for "the Sicilian schoolteacher" who was probably Theognostus the Grammarian. Of the dozen historians Scylitzes lists, Theodore Daphnopates is the only plausible candidate to be the author of the life, and of Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus*. Therefore, unless Scylitzes' list omits the first of his main sources, the identification of Theodore as its author is almost inescapable. Probably Scylitzes either found Theodore's name in his manuscript of *Theophanes Continuatus*, which unlike ours was undamaged at the beginning, or he learned of Theodore's authorship from another source now lost to us.[90]

One of the few parts of the life that seems not to be derived from any of its five postulated sources is a chapter describing Basil's attempts to reform the wayward Michael III and a plot against Basil that, "so they say," these efforts provoked. This chapter looks very much like a fabrication by the author, designed to allay readers' suspicions that if Michael really had behaved so badly, his adoptive son and designated co-emperor was partly responsible, for not stopping him. The chapter includes a characteristic turn of phrase, "with a modest and humble manner," also found in a letter written by Theodore Daphnopates "in the name of Constantine Porphyrogenitus" and formally addressed to the fourth-century St. Gregory of Nazianzus to invite him (meaning his relics) to Constantinople.[91] Here Theodore, like the author of the *Life of Basil*, does not seriously pretend that Constantine is the real author of the composition written in his name. Certain other parallels have been identified between the known works of Theodore Daphnopates, the first four books of *Theophanes Continuatus*, and in a few cases the *Life of Basil*.[92] Otherwise, the style of most of both *Theophanes Continuatus* and the life may best be described as a mixture of the writing styles of Theodore and Nicetas, both of

[89] Scylitzes, pp. 3–4. Here I translate φίλος as "one dear to him" because unlike English "friend" the Greek word can mean a relative and need not mean a personal acquaintance.

[90] For different interpretations of Scylitzes' preface, see Darrouzès and Westerink, *Théodore*, pp. 6–10, Markopoulos, "Théodore," pp. 171–73, and Flusin, "Re-writing History," p. xvi and n. 21 and pp. xviii–xx. For discussion of the authorship of *Theophanes Continuatus* Books I–IV, see below, pp. 188–90.

[91] Cf. *Life of Basil* 24.12–13 (μεθ' ὑποπεπτωκότος καὶ ταπεινοῦ … τοῦ σχήματος), with Daphnopates, *Letters* 11.15–16 (μετ' εὐτελοῦς … καὶ ταπεινοῦ τοῦ σχήματος).

[92] See Šestakov, "К вопросу," though some of the parallels adduced by Šestakov are much less convincing than others and probably belong to passages where Daphnopates copied other sources.

which were classicizing, erudite, and convoluted. Resemblances to the styles of both writers were first noticed some time ago.[93]

As we would expect of the self-effacing author of the *Life of Basil*, Theodore Daphnopates was a less colorful and controversial figure than Photius, Ignatius the Deacon, or Nicetas the Paphlagonian.[94] Daphnopates is chiefly known from his surviving writings, including his collected letters, an encomium of Theophanes Confessor, possibly an encomium of St. Barbara, a life of St. Theodore of Studius, a selection of excerpts from St. John Chrysostom, and orations on John the Baptist, St. George, and Sts. Peter and Paul. Probably Daphnopates also composed a eulogy of Romanus I Lecapenus that is now lost. Finally, Daphnopates seems to have written an oration attributed to Constantine VII on the reception of the miraculous image of Edessa at Constantinople, in 944, that shows close verbal parallels with the *Life of Basil*.[95] Theodore's experience with composing biographies and eulogies and making excerpts makes him a particularly likely candidate to have written the *Life of Basil*, and his encomium of Theophanes is especially likely to have been written by the same author as the first four books of *Theophanes Continuatus*.

Theodore Daphnopates, whose life is largely documented by his letters, was born around 900, apparently in Constantinople, into a family that appears to have been prosperous, well-connected, and at least partly Armenian.[96] In one of his letters Daphnopates mentions making a translation from the Armenian into Greek, and few Byzantines bothered to learn Armenian unless they were of Armenian origin, as many Byzantine officers and officials were. Theodore received an excellent education for his time, and by about 925 already held the high rank of patrician and the high office of protoasecretis, which was normally reserved for men of learning. He appears to have held this office for some thirty-five years, an extraordinarily long tenure, spanning the reigns of both Romanus I

[93] Cf. Jenkins, "Classical Background," p. 19, who writes that the stylistic arguments of Šestakov for Daphnopates' authorship of *Theophanes Continuatus* "are not convincing; indeed, it would not be difficult to show by exactly similar comparisons with the *Vita Ignatii* that the books were written by Nicetas Paphlago, a conclusion which would be, on external evidence, highly unlikely. What such methods of comparison plainly do show, is that the historians of this group were all brought up in the same rhetorical school, and used the same rhetorical style and vocabulary." Jenkins' remarks about the resemblances to the styles of Daphnopates and Nicetas in *Theophanes Continuatus* seem striking, given that he knew both authors well and never considered the explanation suggested here.

[94] See especially Darrouzès and Westerink, *Théodore*, pp. 1–26, and Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 152–57, none of whom accepts that Daphnopates wrote the *Life of Basil* and *Theophanes Continuatus* Books I–IV.

[95] That this oration was written by the same author as the *Life of Basil* seems clear from the parallels between the two (Ševčenko, "Re-reading," pp. 184–85 and n. 46), but the authorship of the former has not been independently established, though an appendix to it has been attributed to Daphnopates. (Cf. Darrouzès and Westerink, *Théodore*, pp. 10–11.) For the text of the oration with a commentary, see Dobschütz, *Christusbilder* II, pp. 29**–107**. (Illert, *Doctrina*, pp. 76–89 and 260–311, adds nothing of importance and reprints Dobschütz's text without its apparatus, though with a German translation.)

[96] Cf. Daphnopates, *Letters* 10.5–13, with Darrouzès and Westerink, *Théodore*, pp. 1–2.

and Constantine VII. Under Romanus, Daphnopates drafted imperial correspondence on such sensitive matters as the negotiation of a peace treaty with Symeon of Bulgaria around 925 and the elevation of the emperor's underage son, Theophylact, to the patriarchate in 933.[97]

Although after taking power in 945 Constantine evidently reassigned most of his official correspondence from his protoasecretis to his quaestor, this arrangement seems to show not that the emperor distrusted Daphnopates but that he wanted the protoasecretis to devote his efforts to literary projects, which Constantine prized.[98] Already in 945 or 946, we find Daphnopates writing a letter from Constantine to the long-dead Gregory of Nazianzus, as mentioned above. Apparently Constantine chose Daphnopates to write a eulogy of Romanus I when the deposed emperor died in 948.[99] The protoasecretis probably composed the *Life of Basil* around 950. He also seems likely to have taken a significant part in preparing the *Historical Excerpts*, a task that must have continued through most of Constantine's reign as senior emperor. Around 958 Daphnopates seems to have completed the first four books of *Theophanes Continuatus*, which were probably meant from the start to be combined with the *Life of Basil* in a single collection, as they are in our manuscripts.[100] Probably in 949, Daphnopates wrote his eulogy of Theophanes Confessor, whom he describes as Constantine VII's ancestor in terms very like those used in the preface to *Theophanes Continuatus*.[101]

After Romanus II succeeded Constantine in 959, the new emperor, who lacked his father's literary interests, promoted Daphnopates to military logothete, the official responsible for paying the army. Around 961 Romanus promoted Daphnopates again, this time to city prefect of Constantinople. After a year or so in this office, Daphnopates apparently retired from public life with the rank of magister, two steps up from the rank of patrician that he had held since his youth. By this time probably in his sixties, he seems to have prepared the collection of his letters, composed his encomium of St. Paul, and excerpted John Chrysostom. Theodore may have lived on for some years after retiring from his distinguished official career.[102] While his writings cannot be considered highly distinguished

[97] Daphnopates, *Letters* 1–3 (on Theophylact) and 5–7 (Symeon); cf. Darrouzès and Westerink, *Théodore*, pp. 11–18.

[98] Unlike Darrouzès and Westerink, *Théodore*, pp. 2–3, I see no reason to think that Daphnopates' lack of participation in politics and diplomacy showed any lack of confidence in him on the part of Constantine VII.

[99] Daphnopates, *Letters* 11 (to Gregory) and 12 (apparently referring to a eulogy of Romanus); see Darrouzès and Westerink, *Théodore*, pp. 18–19.

[100] Cf. Ševčenko, "Title," pp. 86–89.

[101] For a new edition and translation of the preface and a discussion of the date of Daphnopates' encomium of Theophanes, see Ševčenko, "Title," especially pp. 82, 85, and 89–93 (with n. 17 for the date). The encomium itself is edited by Krumbacher, "Dithyrambus," pp. 608–18 (with the reference to the family connection between Theophanes and the emperor on p. 617.21–24).

[102] See Darrouzès and Westerink, *Théodore*, pp. 3–4 and 19–20. For these offices and ranks, see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, pp. 294–95 (magister and patrician), 303–4 (the precedence lists), 310–11 (protoasecretis), 314 (military logothete), and 319–21 (city prefect).

in literary terms, the *Life of Basil* and Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus* were important scholarly compilations. Yet Constantine VII was probably the one who had the idea for both of those works, and without his commissions Daphnopates would have been unlikely to write history, for which he showed no special enthusiasm or inspiration.

Joseph Genesius

Soon after the *Life of Basil* was finished, Constantine evidently decided to commission a history of the years from 813, when Theophanes' *Chronography* ended, to 867, when Basil's reign began. The last part of the chronicle of George the Monk already covered this period, but in a brief and selective manner, with scarcely any information about the reign of Michael III. The earlier part of the *Life of Basil* also had a good deal to say about this period, which fell within Basil's lifetime, but the life became a comprehensive history only with Basil's accession. Although Constantine had no particular interest in Michael III, he did want readers to see what a disastrous ruler Michael had been, so that they would understand why Basil had to replace him. Presumably Constantine knew of the *Secret History* of Nicetas the Paphlagonian, which covered the whole ninth century in some detail, but Nicetas' work cannot have pleased the emperor. Nicetas had a poor opinion of Michael but also disliked Basil and Leo VI, since Basil had rehabilitated Photius, whom Nicetas detested, and Leo had made the fourth marriage that Nicetas abhorred. Apparently Constantine wanted a history favorable to Basil that would be as detailed as the *Chronography* of Theophanes but written in a more elevated style.

Eventually the emperor commissioned two histories of the years after 813, first from Joseph Genesius and then from Theodore Daphnopates, if Daphnopates was indeed the author of Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus*. The identification of Joseph Genesius is partly conjectural but reasonably secure.[103] In our sole

[103] On Genesius, see Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 145–52 (including *Theophanes Continuatus* and rejecting the identification of the historian as Joseph Genesius), Markopoulos, "Quelques remarques" and "Genesios," Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* II, pp. 315–30, Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 351–54, *PmbZ* I, *Prolegomena*, p. 17, and especially Kaldellis, *Genesios*, pp. ix–xxx. I disagree, however, with Kaldellis' argument on pp. ix–xiv that Genesius wrote an earlier version of his history between about 915 and 930, a case that depends on the list in Genesius II.10 of the Arab emirs of Crete up to "the present ruler" and on the succession of the emirs suggested by Miles, *Coinage*, pp. 1–7. I believe, rather, that Genesius copied this list from his source, Nicetas the Paphlagonian's *Secret History*, which was written around 921 and therefore fits Kaldellis' suggested dates. The date of Nicetas' history also helps to clarify the succession of Cretan emirs, which appears to have been as follows (with Genesius' names for the emirs given in quotation marks, the dates for which the emirs are attested given in parentheses, and ranges of possible dates given in the form "847/61"):

"Apohaps"/Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar ibn ʿĪsā (827/28, 847/61)
"Saïpis"/Shuʿayb (884/85, 888/89, 894–95)
"Babdel"/Abū ʿAbdullāh ʿUmar (894/912)

complete manuscript of his history, he is identified as "Genesius" only by a marginal note in a much later hand. This note could of course have depended on good information, such as a lost title page of the same manuscript, or another manuscript ascribed to Genesius that the annotator had found to be the same text. Some have also suggested that the note may be an incorrect guess. Since Scylitzes names Joseph Genesius, a native of Constantinople, as one of those who wrote biased histories after Theophanes, the annotator could conceivably have found the name in Scylitzes' preface and guessed at the identification.[104] If the annotator made such a guess, however, he must have done more research and analysis than we would otherwise expect of him and omitted the name Joseph for no evident reason.

The practically conclusive proof that the history is correctly ascribed to Genesius is that it repeatedly reports the inconsequential and possibly fictional deeds of the ninth-century officer and official Constantine Maniaces ("the Collar"). While Constantine presumably did wear a collar, that soubriquet applied only to him, and he and his descendants used the surname Genesius. At a time when the aristocracy was beginning to adopt family names, perhaps Constantine chose Genesius because he was born on Christmas (*Genesis*).[105] Since the historian was born about a hundred years after Constantine, the two cannot have been

"Zerkunis"/Muḥammad ibn Shuʿayb
"present ruler"/Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar (c. 921, 937/38)
Shuʿayb ibn Aḥmad
ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad (948/49? 951/52?)
ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Shuʿayb (954/55, 961)

The "Saēt son of Apohaps" (Saʿīd son of Abū Ḥafṣ?) mentioned in *Life of Basil* 60 (cf. p. 173 above) is evidently to be identified with Genesius' "Saïpis" (Shuʿayb), the second emir and son of the first emir, Abū Ḥafṣ.

Thus by the time that Genesius himself wrote, c. 954, the emir was apparently ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, the third successor of Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar, who is called "the present ruler" in Genesius II.10.

104 Scylitzes, p. 3.27, describes Genesius and Manuel as "the Byzantines," meaning that they were from Constantinople; the designation "the Byzantines" must include Genesius or it would not be in the plural, but it cannot include Nicetas the Paphlagonian, since Constantinople was not in Paphlagonia. According to the apparatus in Thurn's edition, a few passages in Scylitzes show parallels to Genesius but not to *Theophanes Continuatus*, including Scylitzes, pp. 9–11 (cf. Genesius I.6–7), 16–17 (cf. Genesius I.15),and 18 (cf. Genesius I.16).

105 For the introduction of aristocratic family names, see Patlagean, "Débuts." The name Genesius cannot have been adopted before Constantine, because his earlier relatives were Armenian speakers, living in Armenia, who would not have had a Greek surname, and it cannot have been adopted later, because he named one of his sons Genesius. (Constantine had no apparent connection with the later family called Maniaces.) We should reject as a mistake the testimony of *Vaticanus graecus* 163 (Featherstone, "Logothete Chronicle," p. 420, not paralleled in the corresponding text of Symeon's second edition in Istrin, *Хроника* II, p. 3, or *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.2) that Constantine was "the son of Genesius the Magister," since Constantine's having a father in Byzantine service is incompatible with the considerably earlier and evidently better-informed account of Joseph Genesius. As we shall see in the following paragraph, Genesius the Magister seems to have been Constantine's younger son, not Constantine's father.

personally acquainted, and the historian's only reason for making so much of Constantine is that he was the historian's ancestor. Whoever added the manuscript attribution to Genesius could not have learned of the family connection from the text, because it never mentions the name Genesius. Thus the annotator must have had a good reason to attribute the history to a Genesius. As has already been mentioned, Joseph Genesius may well be the historian whom Scylitzes criticizes for writing "the encomium of one dear to him," meaning Constantine Maniaces.[106]

The men of the Genesius family seem to have lived long lives and fathered children in their forties and fifties. Constantine Maniaces Genesius was apparently born around 815, because he came to Byzantium as an ambassador and hostage from an Armenian princely family under Theophilus (829–42) and remained vigorous enough to compete in a chariot race in 866, though that is the last we hear of him. He held the rank of patrician and the important offices of drungary of the Watch, postal logothete, and domestic of the Excubitors. Constantine had two sons, Thomas the Patrician and another whom we know only as Genesius.[107] Thomas may have been born around 860, because he served as postal logothete in 907 and 913, and sometime between 925 and 945 he received a letter from the protoasecretis Theodore Daphnopates, the apparent author of the *Life of Basil*.[108] Constantine's younger son, Genesius, who may have been born around 865, is probably Genesius the Magister, attested in 906. Although his Christian name may possibly have been Joseph, a man of almost ninety was presumably too old to write a history around 954. Therefore the historian Joseph Genesius was probably Thomas Genesius' son and Constantine Maniaces' grandson.

Apparently Joseph Genesius was the father of Thomas' grandson Romanus the Patrician, who seems to be the same as the Romanus Genesius attested in the late tenth and early eleventh century. The second edition of Symeon the Logothete's chronicle, completed around 969, describes Constantine Maniaces as "the father of Thomas the patrician and postal logothete and the grandfather of Genesius the patrician and chartulary of the inkwell." This Genesius the Chartulary of the Inkwell was very probably the historian Joseph Genesius. Apparently Symeon thought some of his readers would have heard of Genesius the Chartulary of the Inkwell, either because they had read his history or because he was still chartulary.[109] In any case, Symeon and Joseph Genesius would have been contemporaries and must have known each other from their government service.

[106] See above, pp. 176–77.

[107] See Genesius IV.3 (Constantine's origins, rank, and offices) and Symeon I, 131.46 (Constantine's sons and chariot racing when he was drungary of the Watch); cf. *PmbZ* I, no. 3962.

[108] See Darrouzès and Westerink, *Théodore*, pp. 21–22.

[109] The references are conveniently assembled in Markopoulos, "Quelques remarques," especially pp. 104–6. The identification of the historian as the chartulary of the inkwell was originally made by de Boor, "Zu Genesios." On the two editions of Symeon's chronicle, see pp. 211–12 below.

The birthdate of Joseph Genesius' son Romanus can be conjectured from his official career. A letter written by Symeon the Logothete in 981 reports that the government had just appointed as commander of a theme (perhaps Peloponnesus) "the most excellent Lord Romanus the Patrician, grandson of the Lord Thomas the Logothete of blessed memory." A marginal note says of Thomas (or possibly of Romanus), "He means the Lord Genesius."[110] Since in order to hold the rank of patrician and to command a theme Romanus should have been at least in his mid-twenties, he was born not much later than 955; nor can he have been born much earlier, because in 981 he still had an official career of more than thirty years ahead of him. A seal shows that while still a patrician Romanus also served as consul, grand chartulary, and judge of the Velum for the Bucellarian Theme.[111] Presumably he was the same Romanus the Patrician, son of Genesius, who received a dispensation to marry a close relative from the patriarch Sergius II (1001–19). Evidently Romanus was also the Genesius the Patrician who petitioned the same patriarch to recall Symeon the New Theologian from exile in 1011.[112] Two seals of "the [city] prefect Romanus Genesius, magister and vestarch" must be even later, since magister and vestarch were higher ranks than patrician.[113] Thus the Genesius family held some of the highest posts in the Byzantine army and administration.[114]

[110] Darrouzès, *Épistoliers*, pp. 36–37 and 100–101. Darrouzès conjectured that the theme was Peloponnesus because the letter refers to it as "your theme" and seems to be addressed to the metropolitan of Patras; this argument retains its value despite the plausible case of Markopoulos, "Quelques remarques," pp. 106–7, that Darrouzès wrongly identified Romanus Genesius with the Romanus strategus of the Peloponnesus attested by a seal.

[111] See Nesbitt et al., *Catalogue* IV, no. 1.15, with Oikonomidès, *Listes*, pp. 313 (grand chartulary; cf. p. 113.28), 322–23 (judges of the Velum in the themes, the more senior of two sorts of thematic judges), and 325 (consul, by this time a judicial post). An eleventh-century seal of "Genesius[?], imperial protospatharius, asecretis, and judge of the Peloponnesus" (Nesbitt et al., *Catalogue* II, no. 22.9) seems too late to belong to Romanus Genesius but may well belong to another member of the family (Romanus' son?).

[112] See again Markopoulos, "Quelques remarques," p. 107, though I cannot share his assumption that the Genesius the Patrician in 1011 mentioned in Nicetas Stethatus, *Life of Symeon*, chaps. 54, 55, and 102, was Genesius the Chartulary, who would then have been around a hundred years old. Surely the Genesius of 1011 is much more likely to have been Romanus, born around 955 and known still to have been active during Sergius II's patriarchate.

[113] See Laurent, *Corpus* II, nos. 1018 and 1019, and Oikonomidès, *Listes*, pp. 294 (magister and patrician) and 299–300 (vestarch, an office no longer limited to eunuchs by this time).

[114] Another member of the Genesius family was the abbot St. Dorotheus the Younger. According to his encomiast John Mauropus, *Life of Dorotheus*, p. 210, who wrote around 1050, when Dorotheus seems not to have been long dead, his "ancestors on his father's side belonged to the patricians" of the family of "the Genesii" who remained distinguished "even now." Yet Dorotheus' parents were well established at Trebizond in the Theme of Chaldia when Dorotheus was born there, in the second half of the tenth century. Perhaps Thomas Genesius the Patrician, son of Constantine the Patrician, had a son besides Joseph who settled at Trebizond around 900, either because he had received lands there or because he had been named strategus of Chaldia. Kountoura-Galake, "Origins," argues from a few passages in which Joseph Genesius gives slightly more information than *Theophanes*

We may guess that the historian Joseph Genesius was born around 910, midway between the birthdates of his father, around 860, and of his son, around 955. Joseph grew up in Constantinople with the advantages that went with having a wealthy and prominent family. His father, Thomas, was a particularly distinguished man. The author of the *Life of Basil*, writing as if he were Constantine VII, refers to "Thomas the patrician and postal logothete during our reign" as "preeminent in philosophy and famously incorruptible."[115] We have seen that this author was probably Theodore Daphnopates, who called Thomas Genesius "the most learned and wisest of all" in a letter written to consult him on the relation of the body to the soul. Thomas also corresponded with the scholar Arethas of Caesarea and the diplomat Leo Choerosphactes, and he seems to have written a verse epitaph for a charioteer that appears in the *Greek Anthology*.[116] We have also seen that much later Symeon the Logothete identified Romanus Genesius as Thomas' grandson, not as Joseph's son. The historian must have felt somewhat overshadowed by his eminent father.

Joseph received a secondary education that allowed him to adorn his writing with a few quotations from Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, and Euripides, and sometimes to use the archaic dual number.[117] Yet nothing in his clumsy prose indicates that he had received a higher education, or at least that he profited much from it if he did. In a rather sycophantic gesture, Genesius seems to have named his son Romanus, born about 955, for the emperor's son and heir, Romanus II. Around the same time Constantine VII commissioned Joseph to write his history. That Joseph's forebears were so much more important than he was helps explain the prominence he gave to his ancestor Constantine, the only member of the family old enough to figure in the history of the period. That the history failed to satisfy the emperor seems clear from the same assignment's being given to someone else almost as soon as Joseph had finished writing. Joseph may still have been alive, aged about sixty, when Symeon the Logothete referred to him as

Continuatus about the geography of the Armeniac Theme that Genesius had relatives with lands there; but Dorotheus' relatives were established at Trebizond in the Theme of Chaldia, not in the Armeniac Theme, and Dorotheus founded a monastery in the Armeniacs only after long wanderings and a miraculous vision. In these cases Genesius seems simply to have copied a little more information than the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* did from their common source, Nicetas the Paphlagonian's *Secret History*.

115 *Life of Basil* 12. Here presumably the reference is to Thomas' service as postal logothete during Constantine VII's first reign, from 913 to 920, since we know that Thomas was postal logothete in 913, and by 945, if he was still alive, he would have been in his eighties and unlikely to have returned to this office.

116 See Darrouzès and Westerink, *Théodore*, pp. 21–22 and 172–79 (quotation from p. 173. 13–14), with their references. For Thomas's poem in the *Greek Anthology*, see Alan Cameron, *Porphyrius*, pp. 188–91.

117 For the duals, see Genesius I.17.77 (ταῖν χεροῖν), IV.18.6 (τὼ χεῖρε καὶ τὼ πόδε), IV.27.59 (τὼ χεῖρε), and IV.34.64 (ἀμφοῖν), and for the Homeric quotations see the index to the edition of Genesius by Lesmüller-Werner and Thurn, p. 129. Since these duals and quotations seem to lack parallels in *Theophanes Continuatus* and Pseudo-Symeon, they are apparently not Nicetas', but Genesius' own.

patrician and chartulary of the inkwell, around 969. This office was prestigious, allowing Joseph to keep the emperor's purple ink for signing documents, but brought few responsibilities and no intrinsic power.[118] We cannot be sure when he held it.

Genesius entitled his history *On Imperial Reigns*. In an initial poem and preface, both of them brief, he observes that he wrote at Constantine VII's request. In the preface he says the emperor had asked "that I should record the things that have not been presented in a history book, from the reign of Leo [V], crazed by impiety and descended from Amalek, and thereafter." Genesius mentions not only consulting written works but also "having heard from those who lived then and in one way or another knew from tradition handed down from that time." These oral sources must have included Genesius' father, Thomas, who could personally have recalled events from the end of the reign of Michael III and could also have repeated stories from his father, Constantine Maniaces, that went back as far as the reign of Theophilus. Thomas may even have been Genesius' sole oral source, though he was presumably dead by the time his son began writing, since he would then have been nearly a centenarian. We should not be surprised if the traditions Thomas passed on to his son had mainly been about his family, and above all about Constantine Maniaces.

Of the history's four books, Genesius devotes a short book each to the reigns of Leo V, Michael II, and Theophilus and most of the much longer Book IV to the reign of Michael III, leaving about a third of the same book for the reign of Basil I. That Genesius followed the classicizing practice of dividing his history into books is interesting, because neither Theophanes, who had ended where Genesius began, nor any other middle Byzantine historian had used book divisions so far as we know, except for Nicetas the Paphlagonian in the two books of his *Secret History*.[119] Genesius' claim that this period had "not been presented in a history book" before him was false, because Nicetas had evidently presented all of it and more. Yet Constantine VII must have wanted Nicetas' history to be superseded and forgotten, and Genesius must have been happy enough to take credit for Nicetas' research and writing.

In Book I Genesius appears to have done little more than rearrange the material on Leo V in Nicetas' history, most of which Nicetas seems to have taken in his turn from Theognostus the Grammarian. Apparently Genesius began with Nicetas' account of how Leo seized the throne in 813, then inserted the account of Leo's previous career from a somewhat earlier part of Nicetas' history, which *Theophanes Continuatus* later presented in its original chronological order. Remarkably, while Genesius must have had access to Theophanes' chronicle and had evidently been given an assignment to continue it, he made no use of it, though he would have

[118] See Oikonomidès, *Listes*, pp. 311 and 364, and his references.

[119] Although either the lost history of Theognostus the Grammarian, which covered the reigns of Leo V and Michael II, or the lost History of Basil I and Leo VI may possibly have been divided into books, neither of these seems to have been used directly as a source or model by Genesius, Theodore Daphnopates, or Constantine VII.

found it a good source for events before 813.[120] Even Genesius' two different versions of how Leo V became emperor seem both to have come from Nicetas, since they also appear together in *Theophanes Continuatus*. Genesius differed with the latter only on the date of Leo's introduction of Iconoclasm, which Nicetas had not dated and both later authors guessed wrong.[121]

Genesius' Book II again includes variant accounts that he shares with *Theophanes Continuatus* and apparently took from Nicetas, this time concerning the revolt of Thomas the Slav.[122] Here Genesius seems to have added a mistake of his own, saying that "a certain Callinicus of Egypt," the inventor of Greek Fire, gave his invention to Michael II to employ against Thomas. In fact, Callinicus of Syrian Heliopolis (modern Baalbek) had given Greek Fire to Constantine IV a century and a half before Michael II, to use against the Arabs. Perhaps, in describing Michael's use of Greek Fire against Thomas, Nicetas mentioned that Callinicus of Heliopolis had invented the substance, which Genesius misunderstood to mean that Callinicus was a contemporary of Michael's and came from Egyptian Heliopolis (part of modern Cairo).[123] In recording the Arab conquest of Crete, Genesius evidently copied Nicetas' list of the Cretan emirs up to "the present ruler," although this list was outdated by the time Genesius wrote, more than thirty years after Nicetas.[124]

In his Book III, Genesius gives a relatively favorable account of the emperor Theophilus. This again seems to have been taken over almost entirely from Nicetas' history, which apparently depended on the lost saints' lives of Theophobus, Manuel, and the Martyrs of Amorium and mentioned even minor differences among these sources. Genesius was more inclined than *Theophanes Continuatus* or Pseudo-Symeon to copy the pedantic etymologies that Nicetas added to the stories of Manuel and Theophobus.[125] The confusion that reigns throughout Genesius' Book III must be largely the fault of Nicetas, who because he lacked a single reliable source for Theophilus' reign had to cobble together his narrative from hagiography and oral traditions. Yet a comparison with *Theophanes Continuatus* shows that Genesius left out more of Nicetas' account and rearranged what he included, making the confusion worse.

Book IV, on the reigns of Michael III and Basil I, again depends heavily on Nicetas, except for the parts about Basil, which chiefly depend on the *Life of Basil*, and those about Genesius' grandfather Constantine Maniaces. We first meet Constantine in 843, when he is sent to depose the wicked Patriarch John the Grammarian, who accuses Constantine of inflicting minor wounds that John is

120 On Genesius' failure to use Theophanes' *Chronography*, see Kaldellis, *Genesios*, pp. xxi–xxii, where I believe that the verbal parallels Kaldellis notices between Genesius and George the Monk reached Genesius by way of Nicetas the Paphlagonian's *Secret History*.

121 See above, pp. 82–83.

122 See above, pp. 84–85.

123 Genesius II.2.34–37; cf. Theophanes A.M. 6165 for the correct date and the correct Heliopolis. Callinicus is not mentioned in *Theophanes Continuatus*.

124 See pp. 180–81 n. 103 above.

125 See above, p. 150.

found to have inflicted on himself. Genesius adds that after coming from Armenia as a hostage and envoy to Theophilus, Constantine was honored for his merits by being made drungary of the Watch, patrician, postal logothete, and domestic of the Excubitors. Constantine reappears in 856, when he bravely but unsuccessfully tries to prevent the assassination of the postal logothete Theoctistus. Constantine's next exploit is his noble and brave but again unsuccessful opposition, alone among the senators, to Bardas' unjust deposition of Patriarch Ignatius, in 858. When Ignatius is imprisoned naked in the sarcophagus of Constantine V during the winter, the righteous Constantine briefly releases him and brings him wine, bread, and apples, winning Ignatius' lasting gratitude.[126]

Next we find Constantine driving in the same chariot as Michael III, though each chariot usually had a single charioteer and this chariot crashes. At the assassination of the Caesar Bardas, in 866, Constantine valorously intervenes to protect the emperor (even though the assassins were on the emperor's side), then pacifies the angry supporters of the murdered Caesar. Constantine, moreover, is described as a relative of Basil, which seems impossible, and as helping Basil in a wrestling match at a banquet held by Bardas' son Antigonus, which almost certainly never happened. Although the *Life of Basil* also describes Constantine's aid to Basil, it mentions Constantine only at this point and calls him merely Basil's fellow Armenian, not his relative. *Theophanes Continuatus* and Symeon the Logothete record that Constantine competed in a chariot race in 866 but say that he drove a different chariot from the emperor and lost to him.[127] Probably Constantine died soon after 866, since he never appears in Genesius' brief account of Basil's reign. That account depends again on Nicetas and the *Life of Basil*, and includes Nicetas' etymologies of Italy, Sicily, Langobardia, Syracuse, and Zacynthus while omitting anything unfavorable to Basil.[128]

Thus Genesius seems to have added scarcely anything to the relevant parts of Nicetas' *Secret History* and the *Life of Basil* except a few Homeric quotations, several feeble attempts at stylistic elegance, and his own family traditions about his grandfather. Some of these traditions are dubious, and may well be fabrications by Genesius himself. He also omitted much of the material in the *Secret History* and most of that in the *Life of Basil* while rearranging whatever he used from those sources. Even if we ignore the laziness of Genesius' research, the result is an ill-assorted hodgepodge in an awkward and obscure style. Genesius also made a number of grammatical mistakes, including incorrect genders, missing augments

[126] Genesius IV.3, IV.10, and IV.18. On Genesius' treatment of Constantine, see especially Kaldellis, *Genesios*, pp. xv–xxi.

[127] Genesius IV.19, IV.23, and IV.26. On Antigonus' banquet, cf. *Life of Basil* 12 and above, p. 170 and n. 59, and on the chariot race cf. *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.36 and Symeon I, 131.46. The chariot race described by Symeon, admittedly, may have been a different one from that described by Genesius. Since *Theophanes Continuatus*, the *Life of Basil*, and Symeon all identify Constantine as the father of Thomas the Patrician, Thomas may have been an oral source for the History of Basil and Leo that was used by both Symeon and Nicetas.

[128] Genesius IV.32 (etymologies of Italy, Sicily, Langobardia), IV.33.66–68 (an etymology of Syracuse), and IV.34.95–2 (an etymology of Zacynthus).

and reduplications, and nominative and dative absolutes.[129] A few of these could be copyist's errors, and Genesius may have borrowed some of his infelicities from Nicetas, who reportedly wrote his work in rather careless Greek. Yet Genesius must have been responsible for most of the defects of his style and grammar. Nor can he escape responsibility for the many incoherent passages in his narrative, which he could have improved by judicious editing even if he found them in Nicetas' history.

The incompetence of Genesius' prose is probably one reason the emperor was so displeased with *On Imperial Reigns* that he had the same assignment done over again in the first four books of *Theophanes Continuatus*. Another reason for the emperor's dissatisfaction may be that Genesius went beyond his intended assignment and let his Book IV extend into the reign of Basil I, which was already covered by the *Life of Basil*. *Theophanes Continuatus* avoided such overlapping, and Genesius seems to show some uncertainty about when to end his work by giving very brief coverage to Basil's reign in a book mostly devoted to Michael III. Perhaps Genesius' assignment had not been made fully clear to him, and he felt that the *Life of Basil*, which was more a biography than a history, might not quite fill the need for a conventional history of the period. Even in that case, however, Genesius' treatment of Basil's reign was inadequate. Still another reason for the emperor's rejection of Genesius' work may have been the excessive prominence he gave to his grandfather Constantine Maniaces, which appears to have bothered Scylitzes (or his source) and may well have annoyed Constantine VII.

Theophanes Continuatus

The history that modern scholars have named *Theophanes Continuatus* does have its own title, which is extremely long and partly damaged in our lone independent manuscript.[130] This title evidently read *Chronography Compiled at the Order of Constantine Porphyrogenitus Our Christ-Loving Ruler, Son of Leo Our Wisest Ruler and Glorious Emperor, Beginning from Where the Relative of the Emperor, the Blessed Theophanes of Sigriane, Left Off (That Is, with the Reign of Leo* [V] *from Armenia), for Each Part of Which Chronography the Same Emperor Constantine Carefully Collected and Comprehensibly Presented Materials for the Lucid Enlightenment of the Men of*

[129] See the *Index Graecitatis* in Lesmüller-Werner and Thurn's edition of Genesius, pp. 110–17, and cf. Kaldellis, *Genesios*, pp. xxiv–xxv: "His is some of the worst [Byzantine] literary prose, and the blame for this cannot simply be laid at the doorstep of his age (Theophanes Continuatus is a joy to read in comparison). … Genesios will frequently employ many convoluted clauses to make a single and relatively simple claim. … Yet on some occasions he will be extremely abrupt, for no evident reason." Much of this occasional abruptness may be attributable to Genesius' clumsy condensing of Nicetas' text.

[130] On *Theophanes Continuatus*, see Ševčenko, "Title," Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 144–52 (including Genesius), Jenkins, "Classical Background," Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* II, pp. 345–66, Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 339–43, and *PmbZ* I, *Prolegomena*, pp. 16–17.

the Future.[131] Here we find the same claim made in the title of the *Life of Basil*, that Constantine VII collected the materials for the work, while the preface of *Theophanes Continuatus*, like the title of the life, shows that someone else did the writing. We have already seen that John Scylitzes seems to identify Theodore Daphnopates as the author of both the *Life of Basil* and *Theophanes Continuatus*, both of which Scylitzes used as sources.

We have another piece of slightly ambiguous evidence for the authorship of *Theophanes Continuatus*, a genealogy of the Melissenus family apparently composed by the post-Byzantine scholar and Catholic bishop Nicephorus Melissenus (1577–1633). The genealogy says that according to the twelfth-century historian George Cedrenus the emperor Michael I Rhangabe (811–13) consulted the future patriarch Theodotus Melissenus about a slave girl's prophecy that Michael would lose his throne. The text continues, "and Theodore Daphnopates agrees with Cedrenus; for he says that Michael Rhangabel [*sic*], having been expelled from the throne—or rather, having abdicated the throne—and having become a monk on the island of Prote, lived out his life; and his enemies, having deprived his son Theophylact of his genital parts, and likewise also [Theophylact's] brother St. Ignatius, in this way put an end to [Michael's] dynasty." This passage correctly summarizes events as they are related by Cedrenus, who copied them from Scylitzes, though both historians refer to Ignatius only later in their narratives, when they record his accession to the patriarchate. The passage also indicates that Theodore Daphnopates wrote a history that included the year 813, when *Theophanes Continuatus* begins.[132]

Our text of *Theophanes Continuatus*, however, does not quite agree with Cedrenus and Scylitzes, because it says that Michael I became a monk on the island of Plate, not Prote, and gives Theophylact only his monastic name, Eustratius. The one text extant today that identifies Theophylact with Eustratius is Nicetas the Paphlagonian's *Life of Ignatius*. Scylitzes may have confused the island of Plate with the neighboring island of Prote, where the sons of Leo V were exiled and castrated seven years later. On the other hand, perhaps we should emend *Platē* in our text of *Theophanes Continuatus* to *Prōtē*, which not only Scylitzes but Nicetas' *Life of Ignatius*, John Zonaras, and apparently the early Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829 name as Michael I's place of exile.[133] Some modern

[131] For a reconstruction and translation of the damaged title, see Ševčenko, "Title," pp. 79 and 81.

[132] See Darrouzès and Westerink, *Théodore*, pp. 7–10, and Markopoulos, "Théodore," pp. 173–77 (correcting the text and identifying its author as Nicephorus Melissenus); cf. Cedrenus II, pp. 48–49 and 171–72, and Scylitzes, pp. 8–9 and 106.

[133] See *Theophanes Continuatus* I.10. On Theophylact-Eustratius, see Nicetas the Paphlagonian, *Life of Ignatius* 492A–B, and *PmbZ* I, no. 8336. On Plate and Prote, cf. Scylitzes, pp. 8.85 (Michael exiled to Prote) and 24.72 and 27.59 (Leo's sons exiled to Prote), with *Theophanes Continuatus* I.10 (Michael exiled to Plate) and II.1 and II.7 (Leo's sons exiled to Prote). For Prote as Michael's place of exile, see Nicetas the Paphlagonian, *Life of Ignatius* 492B, Zonaras, *Epitome* XV.18.20, and George the Monk p. 776.20–25 and Symeon I, 127.4 (both derived from the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829; see above, pp. 110–11 and

scholars have doubted the identification of *Theophanes Continuatus* Books I–IV with the history of Daphnopates cited by Nicephorus Melissenus, either because *Theophanes Continuatus* and Melissenus' reference to Daphnopates differ slightly or because Melissenus is a late and dubious source.[134] Yet the trivial differences between *Theophanes Continuatus* and Melissenus' reference are of the kind that can be expected when a writer cites from memory, as Byzantine writers routinely did. If Melissenus had simply made up his reference to Daphnopates' mentioning Michael I's exile, only by a truly astonishing coincidence could he have chosen Daphnopates' name for a context that fits Daphnopates so well, on grounds that Melissenus could not plausibly have known.

If Theodore Daphnopates did not compose Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus*, he must have composed another history extending back to 813 to which both Scylitzes and Melissenus referred. Because Genesius could hardly have claimed around 954 that no one had written a history covering the early ninth century if his well-known contemporary Daphnopates had already written one, we would then have three histories of the early ninth century written in the mid-tenth: Genesius' *On Imperial Reigns*, the first four books of *Theophanes Continuatus*, and another, lost history by Daphnopates. Since Daphnopates, whose personal interest in history seems to have been less than obsessive, wrote nearly all his works at the behest of Constantine VII, he would scarcely have decided on his own to supersede two histories commissioned by his imperial patron. If Constantine commissioned Daphnopates' history as well, the emperor must have rejected not just *On Imperial Reigns* but either Daphnopates' history or *Theophanes Continuatus*, whereupon he commissioned the unrejected history as his third attempt to cover the same ground. Yet neither rejection seems likely, since Constantine repeatedly accepted other works by Daphnopates, and *Theophanes Continuatus* is at least as satisfactory a work as the *Life of Basil*, which Constantine accepted. Much the easiest explanation is that Daphnopates is the author who composed Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus* as well as the *Life of Basil*.

In the preface to *Theophanes Continuatus*, the author addresses Constantine VII, whom he praises for his interest in history, declaring, "Taking us only as the hand serving you, you yourself write the history of the lives of those who have preceded you, even if they contain a surfeit of what is bad and undistinguished." The emperor is given credit for "having collected some things from writings by certain men at random and other things from oral traditions," just as he had supposedly collected sources for the *Life of Basil*. Constantine is also said to have specified

n. 109, and more likely to be right because they say that Michael "was exiled to the island nearest the city [Constantinople]," thus describing Prote rather than naming it). Yet the usually reliable *Necrologium* (Grierson, "Tombs," pp. 55–56) says that Michael was exiled to Plate. Both islands had monasteries. (See Janin, *Églises*, pp. 67 and 70–72, whose own references on p. 71 n. 1 confuse Michael's exile with the exile of Leo's sons.) The names Prote (Πρώτη) and Plate (Πλάτη) are so easy to confuse with each other that no definitive answer appears possible; but the balance of evidence seems slightly in favor of Prote as Michael's place of exile.

[134] See Darrouzès and Westerink, *Théodore*, pp. 7–8, and Markopoulos, "Théodore," pp. 173–77.

that "the best beginning for this history would be what was the conclusion [of the chronicle] of Theophanes of blessed memory." Remarkably, the writer not only claims that the emperor was closely related to Theophanes but calls the emperor Theophanes' "grandson," though Theophanes had been born 145 years before Constantine and the writer surely cannot have meant that the holy monk had fathered a child. Yet the phrase must refer to a tradition, then current at the court and mentioned in the book's title, that Constantine's mother, Zoë Carbonopsina, was somehow related to Theophanes. Brief as it is, this preface includes two significant stylistic parallels to Theodore Daphnopates' encomium of Theophanes. The preface concludes by expressing the opinion that careful readers can benefit even from reading about evil deeds, which teach us how to distinguish evil men from good ones.[135]

The treatment of the four emperors before Basil I in *Theophanes Continuatus* is almost twice as long as in Genesius' *On Imperial Reigns*. In comparison with Genesius, who devotes roughly equal space to Leo V, Michael II, and Theophilus, and more space to Michael III only in order to include the rise of Basil, the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* gives little more than half the space to Leo V and Michael II that he does to Theophilus and Michael III. The author of *Theophanes Continuatus* appears to have followed Nicetas' *Secret History* more closely than Genesius did, though he omitted most of Nicetas' geographical etymologies and anti-Photian ranting while removing stylistic infelicities and adding rhetorical verbiage.[136] *Theophanes Continuatus* occasionally uses the dual number, but not in passages corresponding to those where Genesius uses it, as if Nicetas himself had avoided the dual.[137] That the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* consulted the histories of Theophanes and Genesius as well as that of Nicetas is plausible but hard to prove, since parallels between *Theophanes Continuatus* and Theophanes are nonexistent and almost all the parallels between *Theophanes Continuatus* and Genesius could be attributed to Nicetas as their common source.[138]

135 See the text of the preface with translation and commentary in Ševčenko, "Title," especially pp. 83 and 91 n. 21 for the stylistic parallels and pp. 89–93 on the supposed family connection between Constantine VII and Theophanes. Here we should probably understand "grandson" (υἱωνὸς) simply to mean a much younger relative, especially because the Byzantine vocabulary for family relations was neither large nor precise. If, for example, Constantine was actually the grandson of Theophanes' great-grandnephew, as is genealogically and chronologically possible, the writer had no obvious way to explain such a relationship in elegant Greek.

136 Sometimes, however, *Theophanes Continuatus* includes etymologies that Genesius omits: e.g., *Theophanes Continuatus* I.10 (pp. 20–21, on the Monastery of Satyrus or Anatellon). For the case that *Theophanes Continuatus* is closer than Genesius to their common source, see Ljubarskij, "Theophanes Continuatus," who identifies the common source as an historical work without accepting the evidence for Nicetas the Paphlagonian's *Secret History*.

137 Cf. p. 184 and n. 117 above, with (e.g.) *Theophanes Continuatus* I.24 (p. 37.13: τὼ χεῖρε) and IV.10 (p. 159.9: τὼ χεῖρε).

138 We have no special reason to think that the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* did not consult Theophanes, though evidently Genesius did not. (See Kaldellis, *Genesios*,

In Book I, on the reign of Leo V, the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* probably followed Nicetas' original arrangement more faithfully than Genesius did but still modified it somewhat, apparently in an effort to relate events as nearly as possible in chronological order.[139] In his account of the reign of Michael II, in Book II, the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* may not have altered the order of Nicetas' history at all, although he apparently contributed some ruminations of his own on prophecies, along with a report that Photinus, the admiral who failed to retake Crete from the Arabs, was "the great-grandfather of the Augusta crowned by God, Zoë of blessed condition," meaning Constantine VII's mother. Unlike Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus* omitted Nicetas' list of the Arab emirs of Crete, thus avoiding either bringing it up to date, using it in its obsolete form, or confessing ignorance. Finally, after recording that the Arabs who overran Calabria and Langobardia under Michael II were driven out only during the reign of Basil, *Theophanes Continuatus* adds, "but these things [Basil's] history will show." Since the *Life of Basil* fulfills that promise, here the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* seems to be referring to the life as if it were a later part of the same history as his own.[140]

Book III, on the reign of Theophilus, also seems to be almost exclusively based on Nicetas' *Secret History*. In comparison with Genesius, the adaptation of Nicetas' account of Theophilus is more faithful and complete in *Theophanes Continuatus*, so that we can apparently discern where most of Nicetas' different sections came from: the lost Life of Theophobus, the lost Life of Manuel, the lost Acts of the Martyrs of Amorium, and some other written and oral sources.[141] At the end of the book the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* adds a section of his own, a description of Theophilus' buildings, obviously modeled on the description of Basil's buildings in the *Life of Basil*. As in the life, the descriptions in *Theophanes Continuatus* seem to be mostly based on the writer's visiting the buildings himself, perhaps guided by a list from the archives that identified Theophilus' construction work. *Theophanes Continuatus* condemns the Iconoclasm of Theophilus but praises his justice, his devotion to the Virgin, and his returning his stepmother, Euphrosyne, to the convent that she had wickedly left to marry Michael II. This last deed, however, seems to have been invented by the author of *Theophanes*

pp. xxi–xxiii and n. 44.) For an indication that the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* consulted Genesius, see above, p. 84 and n. 22.

139 See above, pp. 83–84.

140 See *Theophanes Continuatus* II.6 (unparalleled in Genesius or Pseudo-Symeon), II.22 (Photinus), II.23 (omitting the list of emirs in Genesius II.10), and II.28 (the forward reference to *Life of Basil* 65). Note that if Constantine VII was the grandson of Theophanes' great-grandnephew (see p. 191 n. 135 above), Photinus could have been Theophanes' nephew.

141 These parts appear to be *Theophanes Continuatus* III.19–21 and 37–38 (mainly from the Life of Theophobus), III.22–29 (mainly from the Life of Manuel), III.30–36 (mainly from the Acts of the Martyrs of Amorium), and III.1–18 and 39.41 (mainly from other written and oral sources). Though these passages have many parallels in Genesius (noted in Lesmüller-Werner and Thurn's edition), Genesius has evidently scrambled his material from Nicetas much more than the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* has. On the lost biographies of Manuel and Theophobus and the Acts of the Martyrs of Amorium (which must be different from those that have reached us), see above, pp. 147–48 and n. 84.

Continuatus himself, who detested Euphrosyne. He almost certainly replaced her name with that of Theodora's mother, Theoctista, in Nicetas' story describing how Euphrosyne taught Theophilus' daughters to venerate icons in her convent.[142]

In summarizing Nicetas' version of the Life of Manuel in Book III, the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* evidently copied much of its distorted chronology. He begins with a campaign against the Arabs in which Theophilus was almost betrayed by his Persian Company under their leader Theophobus, Manuel's rival (which actually occurred in 838). "The next year," *Theophanes Continuatus* goes on, the emperor defeated the Arabs and celebrated a triumph, apparently that of 837. "The next spring" Theophilus was defeated by the Arabs but saved by Manuel (apparently in the battle of Dazimon, of 838, when Manuel did save Theophilus but was mortally wounded). Then the hagiographer seemingly replaced Manuel's death with Manuel's flight to the Arabs and return after an embassy by John the Grammarian (actually in 829–30). Next *Theophanes Continuatus* records John's appointment as patriarch of Constantinople in 838 and reports ominous prophecies that led Theophilus to tonsure his relative Martinacius. "The next year" Theophilus marched against the Arabs without effect, and "around the same time" the khan of the Khazars asked Theophilus to build him a fort called Sarkel. The author of *Theophanes Continuatus* probably added this report from an archival document datable to 839 also used in *De Administrando Imperio*. Then *Theophanes Continuatus* records that Theophilus marched against the Arabs "again" and sacked Sozopetra (actually in 837), that the Persian Company proclaimed Theophobus emperor (actually in 838), and that they submitted to Theophilus and were distributed all over the empire, as happened in 839–40. Thus this section, despite all its distortions, does roughly reflect the course of events in 837–40.[143]

Book IV, on Michael III, seems again to come almost entirely from Nicetas, who mostly based his account at first on the Life of Manuel, who by this time was actually dead, and then on the History of Basil and Leo, though Nicetas used

[142] See *Theophanes Continuatus* II.24 (Euphrosyne's marriage, which Genesius II.14 and Pseudo-Symeon, p. 620.9–11, treat less harshly), III.1 (Euphrosyne's dismissal, not paralleled in sources independent of *Theophanes Continuatus*; see Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 263–65 and 268–71 with n. 375), and III.5 (the story of Theoctista and the icons, attributed to Euphrosyne by Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 628.8–629.3; see Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, p. 310 and n. 427).

[143] *Theophanes Continuatus* III.22 (Theophobus' almost treasonous desertion, which can hardly belong to the hypothetical Life of Theophobus, since it is unfavorable to him; cf. Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 298–300), III.23 (Theophilus' victory and triumph "the next year"; cf. Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 292–95), III.24 (Theophilus' campaign "the next spring" and his rescue by Manuel at Dazimon [Anzen]; cf. Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 298–301), III.25 (Manuel's flight; cf. Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, p. 267), III.26 (John's embassy, Manuel's return, and John's appointment as patriarch; cf. Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 267–68, 272–73, and 297 with n. 406), III.27 (prophecies; cf. Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, p. 301), III.28 (Theophilus' abortive campaign and construction of Sarkel; cf. Constantine, *De Administrando Imperio* 42.23–55, and Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 312, 313, and 315–17), and III.29 (Theophilus' sack of Sozopetra and the Persian Company's revolt and submission; cf. Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 292–93, 301–2, and 313–15).

other written and oral sources as well. Apparently the section from the Life of Manuel begins with Manuel's fictitious recovery from an illness and his initiative in restoring the icons in 843, continues with stories of the restoration of the icons, is interrupted by an account from oral sources of the conversion of the Bulgars, resumes with Manuel's temporary retirement to his future monastery, and ends, before Manuel's death from disease, with his rescue of Michael III from the Arabs in a fictitious battle of Dazimon (Anzen) borrowed from the historical one of 838.[144] Again *Theophanes Continuatus* gives relative dates probably derived from the Life of Manuel: a campaign by Bardas and Michael against the Arabs that besieged Samosata (859?), a campaign "the second year" after that (861?), in which Michael fled to Dazimon and had to be saved by Manuel from Emir ʿUmar of Melitene, and a campaign another "second year" after that (863?), in which ʿUmar was killed after Manuel's death.[145]

For the next section of Book IV, which deals mostly with Leo the Philosopher, the patriarch Ignatius, and Photius, Nicetas evidently had sources that were partly oral. *Theophanes Continuatus* omits everything in Nicetas' account that was unfavorable to Photius, adding that "many books and the whole age spare no pains in making a tragedy of the story" of the controversy over Photius and Ignatius, presumably including Nicetas' *Secret History* and *Life of Ignatius* among books prone to such exaggerations.[146] Most of the rest of Book IV seems to repeat the History of Basil and Leo in Nicetas' version, which the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* abridged so as not to overlap too much with the *Life of Basil*, though he calls attention to his abridgment in another cross-reference to the *Life of Basil*: "But who this Basil was and from what place, and how he came to the emperor's notice, the history concerning him will show." The end of the book, instead of a catalogue of buildings, adds a short list of Michael III's gifts to St. Sophia, probably drawn from the archives of the treasury or of the patriarchate.[147]

[144] These sections seem to be *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.1–12 (mainly from the Life of Manuel; note his recovery in IV.1, his part in the restoration of icons in IV.2, and his role in vindicating the patriarch Methodius in IV.10), IV.13–15 (from oral sources; see above, pp. 148–49 and n. 87), and IV.16–25 (mainly from the Life of Manuel; note his retirement to his future monastery in IV.18, his prediction of Bardas' death in IV.19, his rescue of Michael at Dazimon in IV.24, and his own death in IV.25). Karlin-Hayter, "Études," has postulated a number of sources for Book IV of *Theophanes Continuatus* (and Book IV of Genesius) in addition to the Life of Manuel, and though I doubt that some of these ever existed (e.g., a "Life of Constantine the Armenian"; see Kaldellis, *Genesios*, pp. xvi–xx), others, like the Life of Manuel itself, were probably sources of Nicetas the Paphlagonian's *Secret History*.

[145] *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.23 (the campaign of Samosata in 859; cf. Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* I, pp. 235–36), IV.24 (the victory of Amer/ʿUmar of Melitene in 860/61; cf. Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* I, pp. 244–45, especially p. 245 n. 3), and IV.25 (the defeat and death of Amer/ʿUmar; cf. Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* I, pp. 249–56).

[146] *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.26–35 (mainly from sources on Leo, Ignatius, and Photius, with the reference to "many books" at the end of IV.32); note that the optical telegraph described in IV.35 was invented by Leo the Philosopher according to Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 681–82.

[147] *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.36–44 (chiefly from the History of Basil and Leo, with the cross-reference at IV.43; cf. *Life of Basil* 20–27) and IV.45 (probably from the archives). Scott,

The cross-references in Books II and IV to the *Life of Basil* suggest that the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* considered Books I–IV and the life to be parts of a single composition that his readers would find in the same manuscript. Admittedly, each of the two works has its own preface; the life was written before Books I–IV; and the life is in the form of a biography, whereas Books I–IV are a more conventional sort of history. Our sole independent manuscript of both works, dating from around the year 1000, gives book numbers to *Theophanes Continuatus* I–IV but not to the *Life of Basil*, which only some modern editors have called Book V. Although this manuscript inserts the *Life of Basil* after Book IV, it also adds after the life an account of the emperors from 886 to 963 taken from the second edition of the chronicle of Symeon the Logothete, a quite separate work composed after the death of Constantine VII.[148] Nonetheless, the two cross-references in *Theophanes Continuatus* imply that the author meant for Books I–IV to be copied and read together with the *Life of Basil*. Such an intention is quite natural if Theodore Daphnopates was the author of both works.

Thus the first four books of *Theophanes Continuatus* and the *Life of Basil* form a continuous history of the period from 813 to 886, sponsored by Constantine VII and probably composed by Theodore Daphnopates. In style, readability, and comprehensiveness this work is clearly superior to Genesius' *On Imperial Reigns*, which covers the same period. Both Genesius and the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* did their research on a fairly rudimentary level, since both seem to have depended overwhelmingly on Nicetas the Paphlagonian's *Secret History*, although *Theophanes Continuatus* and the *Life of Basil* include some additional archival material and descriptions of imperial buildings, and the life also draws on Photius' genealogy of Basil and a lost encomium of the emperor. Besides using a few more sources not used by Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus* and the *Life of Basil* exploit Nicetas' history more thoroughly and sensibly than Genesius does, moderating its biases, pedantry, and stylistic infelicities without much rearranging its text. Given the stylistic failings of such writers as Theophylact Simocatta, Nicephorus, and George Syncellus, *Theophanes Continuatus* and the *Life of Basil* form the most elegant history written since the sixth century that survives today.[149] While the inaccuracies in both works can mislead unsuspecting readers and researchers, the same was doubtless true of their main source, Nicetas' *Secret History*.

The compilers of the *Historical Excerpts*, the *Life of Basil*, Genesius' *On Imperial Reigns*, and *Theophanes Continuatus* neither sought nor reached a wide audience. They worked mostly to please one man, Constantine VII, who commissioned their histories primarily for the use of his descendants and their officials. Leaving aside the *Excerpts*, which were clearly not meant to be read through, none of

"Malalas," pp. 100–101, has argued that the story in *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.37 was originally told in praise of Michael III; but Ljubarskij, "Kaiser," p. 43 n. 14, disagrees and seems to me more persuasive.

[148] This MS, *Vaticanus graecus* 167, is described in Ševčenko, *Chronographiae ... liber*, pp. 14*–17*.

[149] For an appreciation of both compositions, see Jenkins, "Classical Background."

the other three histories makes lively reading, and none came close to being a contemporary record. They cover nothing later than the death of Basil I in 886, more than sixty years before they were compiled, when scarcely anyone still living had a personal recollection of Basil's reign, let alone of the period going back to 813. The years from 813 to 886 were also a time of many military reverses and domestic conflicts, as the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* acknowledged when he wrote in his preface that he may have included "a surfeit of what is bad and undistinguished." The *Life of Basil* had at most mixed success at making the reign of Basil I more inspiring. The three narrative histories also made little pretense of being impartial in their praise of Basil or in their criticism of his predecessors, the debauched Michael III and the iconoclasts Theophilus, Michael II, and Leo V. Finally, neither the history of Genesius, which Constantine evidently rejected, nor the *Life of Basil* or *Theophanes Continuatus* is a truly accomplished literary work. Most Byzantine readers preferred histories that were more inspirational, objective, and elegant.

Nonetheless, the official histories of Constantine VII had a real influence on later Byzantine historiography. In comparison with the histories of the previous two hundred years, Constantine's official histories, though mostly compiled from the earlier works, helped to raise literary standards for historiography. By and large Constantine's histories were more polished productions than the chronicles of George Syncellus, Theophanes Confessor, Sergius Confessor, or George the Monk, and probably than the *Secret History* of Nicetas the Paphlagonian. Although not impartial, Constantine's official histories also incorporated elements of their sources' different points of view, without imposing on them the fervent passions of Nicetas or the pervasive ranting against Iconoclasm of Theophanes, Sergius, or George the Monk. Moreover, Constantine's histories set a higher standard of learning, or at least reestablished the standard set by George Syncellus and Theophanes more than a century before. The official historians worked on the assumption that they should summarize the best written sources available in order to produce as complete a picture of the past as possible. Their prefaces and titles said as much, and their works made at least a pretense of fulfilling that ideal.

6
Symeon the Logothete and Pseudo-Symeon

Although Constantine VII's historians were commissioned to write their works by an emperor with an interest in history, their works seem also to have encouraged historians who wrote under Constantine's less bookish successors. None of these writers is known to have had a commission from an emperor, though some may have had, and they all must have hoped to advance their careers by writing their works. More than that, they seem to have concluded from the histories commissioned by Constantine that historians still had important work to do by incorporating earlier accounts into more comprehensive histories. By the accession of Romanus II, in 959, much had happened since the death of Basil I, in 886. Through most of this period the empire had suffered from wars with the Bulgarians and Arabs and disputes over Leo VI's fourth marriage and the imperial succession; but such mishaps became less uncomfortable to recall with the passage of time and the improvement of Byzantine fortunes. Now that earlier ages had become more familiar to educated men through advances in scholarship, including Constantine's *Historical Excerpts*, writers wanted to assign current affairs their proper place in world history. As usual, authors with opinions on recent events wanted to praise what was good and condemn what was bad in their own times, or at any rate to praise their friends and condemn their enemies.

Manuel the Protospatharius

The first history after 959 that we know of is lost, cited only by Symeon the Logothete and John Scylitzes. Symeon says in the second edition of his chronicle, after describing the campaigns of the successful general John Curcuas, "Those who ardently wish and desire to learn of the exploits and reports of John Curcuas will find these set forth in eight books by Manuel the protospatharius and judge."[1] Writing almost a century later, Scylitzes mentions Manuel in a similar passage: "As for anyone whose desire is to learn of [John Curcuas'] exploits, let him seek the painstaking work by a certain Manuel the protospatharius and judge (for he

[1] Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 427–28.

recorded [Curcuas'] noble deeds in eight books), and from it the reader will see how the man was in battle." Manuel also appears among the supposedly biased historians listed in Scylitzes' preface, just after Theodore Daphnopates, Nicetas the Paphlagonian, and Joseph Genesius. Scylitzes describes both Manuel and Genesius as natives of Constantinople.[2] These references have led several modern scholars to conclude that Manuel the Protospatharius wrote eight books on the life of John Curcuas.[3]

Although Curcuas was doubtless an important and capable general, as far as we know no other Byzantine who was not an emperor ever became the subject of a biography in multiple books. Our only Byzantine biographies are of saints and emperors, and Curcuas belonged to neither group. Saints' lives were not as a rule divided into books, and in any case were seldom longer than one ordinary book of a history. Among emperors, the record for the number of books in a biography was evidently held by Constantine I, later revered as a saint; his life by Eusebius of Caesarea comprises a mere four books, though we also know of Praxagoras of Athens' lost *History of Constantine* in two books and Bemarchius of Caesarea's lost *Deeds of the Emperor Constantine* in ten books.[4] The *Life of Basil* has just one long book. Histories of emperors' reigns could of course be longer, like Procopius' history of Justinian's wars, in eight books, but such general narratives, which may well have included Bemarchius' work, were different from biographies. In fact, Symeon says not that Manuel wrote eight books about Curcuas alone, but rather that Curcuas' exploits could be found in Manuel's eight books. Scylitzes, who does imply that Manuel wrote his whole eight books about Curcuas, seems to have misunderstood Symeon's reference without ever having seen this history by "a certain Manuel the protospatharius and judge." Scylitzes' source for this part of his history was evidently the part of Symeon's chronicle from 886 to 963, which he probably found together with Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus* and the *Life of Basil* in a manuscript like the one that has reached us.[5]

Much more likely than that Manuel wrote an unprecedented eight-book biography of a single general is that he composed a history of the type of Genesius and the author of *Theophanes Continuatus*, who had written a few years before him. They begin with 813, the concluding date of Theophanes' *Chronography*, and devote a book to each of the imperial reigns that they record. Manuel must have included the reign of Romanus I, when Curcuas' campaigns occurred, and cannot have written later than the reign of Nicephorus II (963–69), when Symeon cited Manuel's history in his chronicle. Manuel seems unlikely to have written as early as Constantine VII's reign, when as a high official he must have known of the imperial commissions given to Genesius and the author of *Theophanes Continuatus*, and would

[2] Scylitzes, pp. 3.27 (preface; cf. p. 181 n. 104 above) and 230.33–37 (quotation).

[3] E.g., Markopoulos, "Byzantine History Writing," pp. 192–96, Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 167, 273–74, 316–17, and 330, and Alexander, "Secular Biography," p. 196 and n. 1.

[4] See Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 41–46 (on Eusebius) and 47–48 (on Praxagoras and Bemarchius).

[5] On the MS, see p. 195 and n. 148 above; on Scylitzes' sources, see pp. 332–35 below.

hardly have ventured to compete with them. Yet after they had written their works and Constantine had died, in 959, Manuel may well have aspired to supersede their works by covering a period almost twice as long as they had. If he wrote after them and before Symeon, Manuel probably wrote under Romanus II (959–63).

Manuel's first five books presumably covered the five reigns of Leo V, Michael II, Theophilus, Michael III, and Basil I, with a sixth book on the reign of Leo VI. For the seventh book, we may guess that Manuel combined Alexander's very short reign with Constantine VII's minority up to 921, leaving an eighth and final book for Romanus I. Probably Manuel concluded his history with Romanus' death, in 948, which was also the concluding date of the first edition of Symeon's history. Since this also marks the end of the part of Symeon's second edition that seems to depend on Manuel, Manuel appears not to have written on the most recent ten to twelve years, perhaps because he was wary of offending some of his contemporaries by whatever he said or left out. While between 913 and 921 Symeon apparently depended on Nicetas the Paphlagonian's *Secret History*, we shall see that Nicetas was probably one of Manuel's sources as well, and that Manuel seems not to have known very much about the time before 921, either from his own experience or from his contemporaries' reminiscences.

We have already seen that Symeon's history, which in its second edition mentions Manuel by name, shows a significant change after Epiphany (Jan. 6) 921, when its chronology ceases to be accurate. The fact that Symeon records the Church Union of July 920 as if it had occurred after Epiphany 921 indicates that his entry for the union depended not on Nicetas but on a later source that included the reign of Romanus I.[6] We shall see that after 948, when the first edition of Symeon's chronicle concludes, the style of Symeon's second edition changes markedly, presumably showing where Symeon ceased to summarize a source and began to compose on his own.[7] The section of Symeon's chronicle from 948 to its end in 963 is composed in a peculiar panegyrical style and mentions no dates at all between Romanus' death, in 948, and Constantine VII's death, in 959. By contrast, the style of the part of Symeon's chronicle from 921 to 948 is relatively simple and direct. Thus Manuel's history is probably the source of the part of Symeon's chronicle between 921 (including the misplaced reference to the Church Union of 920) and 948. This was the period of most of John Curcuas' career, for which Symeon cites Manuel's history as a source.

The part of Symeon's chronicle from 921 to 948 shares several significant features. Its narrative is specific and circumstantial, with many details of internal Byzantine politics. It also includes twenty indictional dates, of which five are wrong by at least one year. These mistakes, which appear in both of Symeon's editions and are not typical of the earlier and later parts of Symeon's chronicle, are presumably the fault neither of a copyist nor of Symeon but of his source. Of the ten dates from 920 to 931, half are erroneous; whereas of ten dates from 933 to 948,

[6] See above, pp. 149–50 and n. 91.
[7] See below, pp. 214–16.

all are correct.[8] Evidently Manuel, writing around 962, had trouble determining exact dates up to 931 but had less trouble with more recent dates. Manuel also seems to have liked to conclude predictions or other sequences of events with the phrase "which was indeed what happened." While no such phrases appear in the section of Symeon's chronicle from 948 to 963, they occur four times in the section from 921 to 948.[9] Within this section the interest in internal Byzantine politics, the sometimes inaccurate indictional dates, the straightforward style, and the repeated phrase "which was indeed what happened" all seem to be characteristics of the history of Manuel the Protospatharius.

Interestingly, similar phrases meaning "which was indeed what happened" appear twice in the part of the first edition of Symeon's chronicle on the years from 886 to 921, and a third time in a passage found only in Symeon's second edition.[10] All three of these phrases seem to occur within material derived from Nicetas' *Secret History* that Symeon used to supplement his basic source, the History of Basil and Leo. The explanation seems to be that for this period Symeon, instead of using Nicetas' *Secret History* directly, used material from Nicetas' history that had been rewritten by Manuel, who added this feature of his own style in the process of rewriting. Apparently the first edition of Symeon's chronicle summarized Manuel's history but omitted some parts of it that Symeon later went back and

[8] See Symeon I, 136.12 (Christopher's proclamation as emperor on May 17 of the 5th indiction [wrong: 9th indiction, 921]), 136.13 (the Church Union on a Sunday in July of the 8th indiction [July 9, 920]), 136.14 (the exile of Stephen the Magister on February 8 of the 9th indiction [921]), 136.21 (the death of Romanus' wife, Theodora, on February 20 of the 10th indiction [wrong: 12th indiction, 924]) 136.29 (the Bulgarian raid on Thrace in September of the 2nd indiction [wrong: 12th indiction, 923]), 136.40 (the death of Patriarch Nicholas on May 15 of the 13th indiction [925]), 136.45 (the death of Symeon of Bulgaria on May 27 of the 15th indiction [927]), 136.55 (the death of Patriarch Stephen II on July 18 of the 6th indiction [wrong: 15th indiction, 927]), 136.62 (the death of Emperor Christopher in August of the 4th indiction [931]), 136.63 (the deposition of Patriarch Tryphon in August of the 3rd indiction [wrong: 4th indiction, 931]), 136.66 (the consecration of Patriarch Theophylact on February 2 of the 6th indiction [933]), 136.69 (the first raid of the Magyars on Thrace in April of the 7th indiction [934]), 136.70 (the death of Helen, wife of Romanus' son Constantine, in February of the 2nd indiction [944]), 136.71 (the attack of the Rus' on June 11 of the 14th indiction [941]), 136.75 (the defeat of the Rus' in September of the 15th indiction [941, though Wahlgren's apparatus incorrectly gives the date as 943], 136.77 (the invasion of the Magyars in April of the 1st indiction [943]), 136.78 (Romanus' request that the Frankish king Hugh send his daughter to marry Romanus II in the 2nd indiction [943/44]), 136.78 (Romanus II's marriage to Hugh's daughter in September of the 2nd indiction [944, though Wahlgren's apparatus wrongly gives the date as 945]), 137.7 (the plot in favor of the exiled emperor Stephen in December of the 6th indiction [947]), and 137.8 (the death of Romanus I on July 15 of the 6th indiction [948]).

[9] See Symeon I, 136.50 (καὶ γέγονεν), 136.60 (ὃ δὴ καὶ γέγονεν), 136.80 (ὃ δὴ καὶ γέγονεν), and 136.83 (ὃ καὶ γέγονεν). Similar phrases can admittedly be found in other Byzantine historians (e.g., Scylitzes, p. 369.19: ὃ δὴ καὶ γέγονεν), but not with the same frequency, and some of these instances may actually be influenced by the author's having read the phrase in Manuel's text or a text copied from his.

[10] See Symeon I, 133.38 (ὃ δὴ καὶ γέγονε) and 133.41 (ὃ δὴ καὶ γέγονε), and Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, p. 373.23 (ὃ καὶ γέγονεν).

added in his second edition. Thus Symeon's citation of Manuel's history, which is missing from Symeon's first edition, appears in the second edition. Prominent among the passages that appear in the second edition but not in the first are several that describe the exploits of John Curcuas up to 946 and presumably derive from Manuel.[11]

Thus Symeon seems not to have made direct use of Nicetas' *Secret History*, unlike Genesius and the author of the *Life of Basil* and *Theophanes Continuatus*, who must have known Nicetas' work directly, because they wrote before Manuel did. Our only sources for the contents of Manuel's history appear to be the two editions of Symeon's chronicle. In the first edition, however, Symeon appears to have made little use of Manuel's history for the period from 813 to 886, perhaps because he found Manuel's history difficult to combine with his three main sources for that time, the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829, the Continuation of Theophanes from 829 to 844, and the History of Basil and Leo. Symeon seems to have realized that these three sources were arranged in chronological order and to have tried to preserve that order as faithfully as he could by not contaminating it with other sources. Symeon would of course also have realized that Manuel was a much later source, who could add little to what Symeon found in his other sources.

Manuel, however, may be the source of a few entries for the reign of Michael III in Symeon's first edition that seem not to come from the History of Basil and Leo.[12] These entries, identifiable because they interrupt the chronological sequence, appear in three segments of Symeon's narrative. The first two describe the consecration of Patriarch Ignatius, in 847, a campaign against the Bulgars of uncertain date and dubious historicity, and another questionable campaign against the Bulgars that allegedly caused their conversion to Christianity. These entries have no parallels in Genesius' *On Imperial Reigns* or in *Theophanes Continuatus*, as both fail to mention Ignatius' consecration or such campaigns against the Bulgars in their accounts of the Bulgars' conversion, which seem to come from Nicetas' *Secret History*.[13] If Symeon found accounts in Manuel's history that differed from these, Manuel must have had a source besides Nicetas' *Secret History*.

[11] Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 415.10–416.7, 424.21–22, 425.12–23, 426.9–429.14, and 442.18–443.12. For the date of the last incident, an exchange of prisoners with the Arabs conducted by Curcuas and datable from Arabic sources to October 946, see Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* II.1, p. 316 and n. 1.

[12] See above, pp. 128–29.

[13] Symeon I, 131.17 (the consecration of Ignatius), 131.18 (a campaign that drove Bulgar raiders out of Thrace), and 131.25 (a campaign that led the Bulgars to convert). Although the apparatus to Wahlgren's edition cites Genesius IV.7 and IV.16 and *Life of Basil* 96 as parallels for the two Bulgarian campaigns, in the first passage Genesius (like *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.13) says that Theodora stopped the raid simply by warning the Bulgar ruler that he could win no glory by fighting a woman, while in the second passage Genesius says that Boris was persuaded to convert by a successful Byzantine campaign against the Arabs (not a campaign against the Bulgars), and the *Life of Basil* refers to events after the conversion of the Bulgars. *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.14–15 gives two alternative explanations for the Bulgars' conversion, neither of them connected with a Byzantine campaign.

Yet Symeon's third group of additions to the History of Basil and Leo, which describe Ignatius' deposition, in 858, and a raid on Constantinople by the Rus', in 860, shows clear parallels of content, though not of style, to Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus*, and even some similarities to Nicetas the Paphlagonian's *Life of Ignatius*.[14] Here the ultimate source does seem to have been Nicetas' *Secret History*. Since Symeon seems not to have used Nicetas' history directly, the most likely explanation is that he took this information from Manuel, and that the lack of stylistic parallels shows Manuel's rewriting of Nicetas' text. Manuel seems likely to have relied heavily on Nicetas' *Secret History* for the whole period from 813 to 921, though he probably also used Genesius and *Theophanes Continuatus*, and at least one additional source. We shall also see that Symeon's second edition probably included some other passages from Manuel's account of the years from 842 to 886.[15]

What we can conjecture about Manuel the Protospatharius' life is even scantier and more uncertain than what we can surmise about his lost history. According to Scylitzes, Manuel was a native of Constantinople, which is a reasonable thing to say of any Byzantine bureaucrat but may simply be a good guess, because Scylitzes seems not to have known Manuel's work directly. Manuel must have received the standard secondary education that qualified him for the civil service, but we have no special reason to think he was much better educated than that. According to Symeon, by the time Manuel wrote, presumably around 962, he held the moderately high rank of protospatharius and the office of judge. His history evidently showed the interests in court politics and diplomatic and military affairs that we would expect of such an official. Manuel seems somehow to have been connected with the noble Argyrus family, about whom he included many favorable reports that are abridged in the first edition of Symeon's history but appear at greater length in its second edition.[16] We cannot confidently say whether Manuel was a relative of the Argyri or was simply a friend or client of the family.

We have seen that Manuel and the acquaintances he consulted could remember events as early as 920 with some confusion and events as early as 933 with reasonable accuracy. The historian admired John Curcuas, who is last attested in 946 and is likely to have known Manuel personally.[17] We may therefore suppose that Manuel was born around 910, or a little later. A lead seal that may well belong to him has been dated to the tenth or eleventh century, naming "Manuel, imperial protospatharius and *oikistikós*." The *oikistikós* was a moderately important official with

[14] Cf. Symeon I, 131.28–30, with Genesius IV.18 (only the deposition), *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.30–33 (both the deposition and the raid), and Nicetas the Paphlagonian, *Life of Ignatius* 503B–505D (the deposition) and 516C–517A (the raid). On these accounts of Ignatius' deposition, see Karlin-Hayter, "Études," pp. 475–84, who plausibly argues that Ignatius suffered torture and resigned before Photius' consecration (as the chroniclers report), not afterward (as the *Life of Ignatius* maintains).

[15] See below, pp. 212–14.

[16] See below, p. 213 and nn. 56 and 60. On the Argyri, see Vannier, *Familles*—who, however, lists no Argyri named Manuel.

[17] See p. 201 n. 11 above.

poorly attested duties that seem to have been judicial and were consequently suitable for a judge like our historian.[18] The main reason Manuel's history is lost today, and was not even discovered by Scylitzes a century later, is probably that within a few years it was largely subsumed into Symeon's history, which then superseded it.

Symeon the Logothete

The chronicle of Symeon the Logothete was one of the more popular Byzantine historical works.[19] The title of its first edition was something like *On the Creation of the World from the Time of Genesis, and a Chronicle after That, Compiled by Symeon the Magister and Logothete from Various Chronicles and Histories*.[20] If this Symeon the magister and logothete was the same as Symeon Metaphrastes ("the Paraphraser"), he also compiled an even more popular set of saints' lives that he paraphrased into Attic Greek from their original, less elevated styles. The identification of the chronicler with Symeon Metaphrastes, however, has been disputed by some modern scholars.[21] The course of the career of Symeon the Logothete has also been a matter of controversy. While Symeon the Logothete must have written after the death of Romanus I, which he mentions in both editions of his chronicle, some have seen him as a partisan of Romanus and a critic of the Macedonian dynasty. Although our sources include a number of references to officials and authors named Symeon who lived during the tenth century, not all of these can describe the same man, and some of our evidence appears to be self-contradictory.

One problem is that two later sources, the eleventh-century scholar Michael Psellus and the fifteenth-century theologian Mark Eugenicus, say that Symeon Metaphrastes served as a general in 905. Eugenicus adds that Symeon was born

18 Laurent, *Corpus* II, pp. 189–90, no. 399; on the office, see Kazhdan in *ODB* III, p. 1516.

19 On Symeon, see Wahlgren, *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon* I, pp. 3*–137*, "Symeon," and "Original," Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 162–70, Markopoulos, "Sur les deux versions," Treadgold, "Chronological Accuracy," Jenkins, "Chronological Accuracy," Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* II, pp. 391–410, Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 354–57, and *PmbZ* II, *Prolegomena*, pp. 2–10. Before the first version of Symeon's chronicle was properly edited in 2006 (its second version remains poorly edited), modern scholars had to use inadequate editions of Symeon's text under the names of either Leo Grammaticus, Theodosius Melissenus (incorrectly called "Melitenus"; see Kresten, "Phantomgestalten," pp. 208–12), or Georgius Monachus ("Continuatus" or "Interpolatus"), or in two Slavonic translations. The absence of a proper edition has caused some serious errors in the scholarly literature. Among the worst of these are confusion of the text of the real Symeon with the considerably different text of Pseudo-Symeon, partially edited under the name of "Symeon Magister" (see below, pp. 217–23), and the misconception that Symeon wrote in order to continue the chronicle of George the Monk (because parts of Symeon's chronicle have been added to George's text in some MSS).

20 See Wahlgren, *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon* I, pp. 111*–114*.

21 The most recent proponents of the identity of the historian and the metaphrast are Ševčenko, "Poems," pp. 210–28, Oikonomidès, "Two Seals," and Treadgold, "Chronological Accuracy," p. 160 n. 6. More recently the identification has been doubted by Wahlgren, *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon* I, pp. 3*–8*, Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 162–70 (on the historian) and 231–47 (on the metaphrast), and Høgel, *Symeon*, especially pp. 61–88.

under Leo VI (886–912) and served as postal logothete under Nicephorus II (963–69), John I (969–76), and Basil II (976–1025), meaning that Symeon had a professional career spanning more than seventy years. The solution to this problem must be that Psellus and Eugenicus were misled because Symeon Metaphrastes, in paraphrasing a life of St. Theoctista by Nicetas the Magister, copied Nicetas' first-person reference to leading an army in 905, thus giving the impression that Symeon had led the army himself.[22] Probably Eugenicus (or his source) dated Symeon's birth during Leo VI's reign in a desperate attempt to explain how Symeon Metaphrastes could have been active both in 905 (as he surely was not) and under the emperors from Nicephorus II to Basil II (as he evidently was).

A second problem is that in one of our manuscripts the letters of "Symeon magister and logothete" have been mixed with some of the letters of Patriarch Nicholas Mysticus (r. 901–7 and 912–25). Although some scholars have tried to explain this confusion by suggesting that the young Symeon wrote letters for Nicholas as his secretary, this would again require Symeon to have had an implausibly long career of at least seventy years, because the collection includes two letters ascribed to Nicholas that are datable to 912 and a letter ascribed to Symeon that is datable to 981. Thus the combination of the two men's letters in the same collection seems to have happened by mistake, so that Nicholas' letter tells us nothing about the dates of Symeon the magister and logothete.[23] The letter that seems to show that Symeon was postal logothete in 981, however, is fully compatible with Symeon's having served under Nicephorus II, John I, and Basil II.

Even if we disregard the obvious mistake made by Psellus and Eugenicus that Symeon Metaphrastes served as a general in 905, two Symeons do appear to have held the rank of patrician and the office of protoasecretis in the tenth century, and at least one of these two Symeons was later promoted to magister and logothete. The chronicle of Symeon the Logothete itself mentions a Symeon who was only an asecretis in 904, when he managed to ransom many of the captives taken at Thessalonica from the Arab raider Leo of Tripoli, but who became a patrician and protoasecretis some time later.[24] The *Life of Euthymius* shows that the Symeon who had ransomed the Thessalonian captives was still only an asecretis in 907. Later Constantine VII's *De Administrando Imperio* mentions that a Symeon, evidently the same man, was a patrician and protoasecretis at an uncertain date between 923 and 930.[25]

22 See Høgel, *Symeon*, pp. 66–68 (on Psellus) and 70–74 (on Eugenicus and a possible source that he shared with Psellus), referring to the explanation of Psellus' reference to Symeon's generalship first given by Delehaye, *Mélanges*, pp. 105–16. In fact, we shall see that Symeon seems to have served under Nicephorus II not as postal logothete but as military logothete, but that error is not a serious one.

23 See Darrouzès, *Épistoliers*, pp. 33–38 (dating Symeon's letter no. 4 to 981 and suggesting that Symeon served as Nicholas' secretary around 925 at the age of 25 or 30), and Jenkins and Westerink, *Nicholas*, pp. xxxiii–xxxiv (noting that the Patmos MS includes letters datable to 912, which apparently rules out Darrouzès' suggestion).

24 Symeon I, 131.41.

25 See *Life of Euthymius* 13, p. 87 (cf. 15, p. 101), with the commentary of Karlin-Hayter, *Vita*, pp. 211–12, and Constantine, *De Administrando Imperio* 46.64–68, with Jenkins et al., *Constantine* II, pp. 179 (for the date) and 180 (on Symeon).

This Symeon, however, seems not to have been protoasecretis before 919, when the protoasecretis Constantine Malelias joined a failed conspiracy and was presumably cashiered as a result. The Symeon mentioned in *De Administrando Imperio* seems to have ceased to be protoasecretis about 925, when Theodore Daphnopates began his long tenure in that office, apparently serving until 959.[26] The Symeon who conducted important negotiations with Leo of Tripoli in 904 and was protoasecretis from about 919 to 925 cannot have been born much later than 875. We have no particular reason to think that he ever became a magister or logothete or wrote literary works. Since the much later chronicle of Symeon the Logothete records the promotion of the Symeon the asecretis of 904 to protoasecretis but not to any higher office, the first Symeon seems either to have retired around 925 or to have died then. After that date we hear of no high official named Symeon for some thirty-four years—until 959, when the asecretis of 904 would have been well over eighty.

In 959 a poem lamenting the death of Constantine VII was written by a Symeon who according to the poem's title was then a patrician and protoasecretis and was later to become a magister and military logothete.[27] Evidently this Symeon was the immediate successor of Theodore Daphnopates, who was promoted from protoasecretis to military logothete in or just before 959. We cannot plausibly identify the Symeon the patrician and protoasecretis who wrote the poem with the earlier Symeon the Protoasecretis, because an octogenarian would hardly have been a suitable candidate for future promotion to magister and military logothete. We can, however, quite reasonably identify the poet Symeon the patrician and protoasecretis with the Symeon the patrician and protoasecretis who drafted laws for Romanus II, between 959 and 963, and for Nicephorus II, in 964 and 967. This was doubtless the same Symeon the patrician and protoasecretis who according to the second edition of Symeon's chronicle served as one of the regents for Basil II and Constantine VIII from March to August of 963.[28]

The second Symeon the Protoasecretis must be the same Symeon the Protoasecretis who pursued the indignant Western ambassador Liudprand of Cremona in June 968 in an attempt to explain why the emperor Nicephorus had given some Bulgarian envoys precedence over Liudprand at the imperial table.[29] When the historian Leo the Deacon reports that Symeon the magister and logothete misinterpreted the significance of a comet for John Tzimisces in 975, we may reasonably suppose that this was the same Symeon. By 975 Symeon must therefore have received his promotion from protoasecretis to military logothete, the office that he later attained according to the title of his poem of 959, if not necessarily to the more important position of postal logothete.[30] Around 980, according to the

[26] Symeon I, 136.4 (on Constantine Malelias as protoasecretis), and pp. 178–79 above (on Theodore Daphnopates as protoasecretis).
[27] Ševčenko, "Poems," pp. 210 (title) and 215–20 (commentary).
[28] See Markopoulos, "Témoignage," pp. 100 (text) and 118 (commentary).
[29] Liudprand, *Relatio* 19.
[30] Leo the Deacon, *History* X.6.

Byzantine Arab historian Yaḥyā of Antioch and the Georgian translator Ephrem Mtsire, Symeon the Logothete had begun to prepare new versions of the lives of the saints and was consequently known as Symeon Metaphrastes.[31]

Symeon was promoted from military logothete to postal logothete before 981, when we have already seen that he wrote a letter as magister and postal logothete. He was evidently also the Symeon the magister and postal logothete attested on two lead seals that are datable to the second half of the tenth century.[32] Since we have a poem on the death of Symeon the magister and postal logothete composed by his friend Nicephorus Uranus, who was imprisoned in Baghdad from 979 until at least 987, Symeon must have died later than 987.[33] Yet he probably died not very much later, because he left his hagiographical work unfinished, and Leo the Deacon, writing around 995, refers to him in the past tense.[34] Since this Symeon became protoasecretis in 959, was still spry enough to pursue Liudprand in 968, and was working on an ambitious literary project in the 980's, he may have been born around 925.

As for the historian Symeon the Logothete, we have seen that even for the first edition of his chronicle he used the history that Manuel the Protospatharius wrote around 962, meaning that Symeon probably wrote at least a few years later. The second edition of Symeon's history breaks off in our manuscript in July 963 and appears to have ended only a little later, with the reception of Nicephorus II into Constantinople that August.[35] Symeon apparently wrote both editions of his work during Nicephorus' reign (963–69), because he gives the title of emperor to Nicephorus but not to his successor John Tzimisces, praises Nicephorus much more than his murderer John would have liked, and extols the virtue of the empress Theophano in a way that seems improbable after she was exiled for helping murder her husband, Nicephorus.[36] Although the Symeon attested as a patrician and protoasecretis still held that rank and office in June 968, he could nonetheless have become magister and military logothete and completed his chronicle during the remaining year and a half before Nicephorus' murder, in December 969.

[31] See Høgel, *Symeon*, pp. 66 and 69–70.

[32] See Darrouzès, *Épistoliers*, pp. 36–37 (cf. p. 204 and n. 23 above), and Oikonomidès, "Two Seals."

[33] See Høgel, *Symeon*, pp. 64–65.

[34] For the hagiographical work's being unfinished, see Høgel, *Symeon*, pp. 110–26. Leo the Deacon, *History* X.6, refers to Symeon in the imperfect tense.

[35] See Markopoulos, "Témoignage," especially pp. 87–90. The MS that supplies the latest part of Symeon's text is *Vaticanus graecus* 163, which is not itself damaged but appears to be a copy of an archetype that was missing its last page.

[36] See Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 378 (Nicephorus called emperor and "victor"), 428 (John mentioned but not as emperor, and Nicephorus called emperor and "victor"), 458 (Theophano praised), 459–60 (Nicephorus praised), 475–76 (Nicephorus praised), and 478 (Nicephorus praised), and in Markopoulos, "Témoignage," p. 100 (Nicephorus praised, and John mentioned but not as emperor). Although the text of Symeon's second edition in *Vaticanus graecus* 153, edited in Istrin, *Хроника* II, p. 20.20, refers to Nicephorus as "having been emperor" (βεβασιλευκότος), that usage is not paralleled elsewhere in that MS or anywhere in *Vaticanus graecus* 167 (*Theophanes Continuatus* VI) and is probably an alteration of Symeon's text made by a copyist after 969.

Admittedly, the fact that Symeon had been logothete could have been added to the title of his chronicle after its completion, around 969. Yet the title could also be contemporary, because Symeon is not attested as protoasecretis after 968 and was surely a logothete of some sort by 975.[37] In any case, the evidence indicates that the same Symeon was a patrician and protoasecretis between 959 and 968, a magister and military logothete soon after 968, an historian who wrote around 969, and a postal logothete by 981. The panegyrical treatment of Constantine VII in the part of the chronicle composed by Symeon the Logothete around 969 also resembles the panegyrical poem on Constantine written by Symeon the protoasecretis and future logothete in 959. We can safely dismiss the possibility that the chronicle written around 969 was the work of the older Symeon the patrician and protoasecretis, who would then have been well over ninety and seems never to have been either a magister or a logothete.[38]

Nonetheless, since the name Symeon was only moderately common at the time, it seems unlikely to be a coincidence that two Symeons held the rank of patrician and the office of protoasecretis, or that one died, and the other was born, around 925. Children were often named for their relatives, and men whose relatives had held high offices often came to hold the same or similar offices. A family connection between the two Symeons therefore seems probable, and would explain why Symeon the historian knew and mentioned that the Symeon the asecretis of 904 became protoasecretis later. Perhaps, since grandsons were often named for their grandfathers, the elder Symeon was the grandfather of the younger Symeon, whose father's name would then be unknown to us. Another possibility is that the elder Symeon, like some members of the Genesius family who had children late in life, fathered the younger Symeon around the age of fifty. The younger Symeon may even have been a posthumous child, since posthumous sons seem to have been most likely to be named for their fathers.[39]

[37] Note that our MSS of the chronicle call Symeon a logothete but not postal logothete, an office seemingly held by John Tzimisces just before his accession to the imperial throne, in 969. See the descriptions of the MSS in Wahlgren, *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon* I, pp. 27*–46*; and, for Tzimisces as postal logothete, see Psellus, *Concise History* 105.43–46 (admittedly a dubious source), Zonaras, *Epitome* III, pp. 516–17 (probably copied from Psellus), and Guilland, "Logothètes," pp. 55–56 (including Symeon as Tzimisces' successor).

[38] The suggestions to this effect by Høgel, *Symeon*, pp. 80–81, and Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 163 and 235, are based partly on dating the chronicle too early, partly on failing to identify the asecretis and future protoasecretis Symeon of 904 with the protoasecretis of between 923 and 930, and partly on overlooking the fact that some of the letters attributed to Symeon but actually belonging to Nicholas I date as early as 912. Høgel, *Symeon*, pp. 81–85, tries to redate the letter of Symeon that Darrouzès dated to 981 by arbitrarily postulating an otherwise unknown Bishop Theodegius of Athens "around the 920's" in addition to the Theodegius known to have been bishop of Athens between 981 and 997; besides implausibly assuming two bishops of Athens with the same extremely rare name, such a redating requires the incredible assumption that Romanus Genesius, who lived past 1011, served as a general in the 920's. (See pp. 182–83 and n. 112 above.)

[39] On the middle-aged fathers of the Genesius family, see above, pp. 182–84. For posthumous sons likely to have been named for their fathers, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine*

We can now draw a biographical sketch of the usual conjectural sort for Symeon the Logothete. He was probably born around 925, the son or grandson of the earlier Symeon the patrician and protoasecretis. Michael Psellus says, plausibly enough, that Symeon was born in Constantinople into a distinguished and wealthy family and received a good education in rhetoric and philosophy. Nicephorus Uranus indicates that Symeon remained unmarried.[40] Psellus implies that Symeon served as an asecretis before becoming protoasecretis.[41] Probably Symeon became an asecretis soon after 945, under Constantine VII, then succeeded Theodore Daphnopates as protoasecretis around 959, when Symeon wrote his poem mourning Constantine. In writing his history under Nicephorus II, when a writer had no need to disguise his opinions of earlier emperors, Symeon viewed Constantine VII very positively and Romanus II rather less so. Far from favoring Romanus I or opposing the Macedonian dynasty in general, as some have supposed, Symeon seems to have been a conscientious official who served whatever emperor was in power. He had a genuine admiration for Constantine VII, however, perhaps combined with gratitude because that emperor had first appointed him to office.[42]

Symeon soon became an important and well-connected person, having attained a prestigious rank and office at a relatively early age. As protoasecretis, Symeon drafted laws for Romanus II and Nicephorus II. In between their two reigns, he served as one of the regents for the underage Basil II and Constantine VIII, an important but delicate responsibility that he managed to fulfill without offending any of the wrong people. Under Nicephorus II, Symeon seems to have finished both editions of his history, one after the other, perhaps in 968 and 969. His literary efforts may well have won him his promotion to magister and military logothete before Nicephorus' murder, in 969. John Tzimisces also trusted Symeon and may have been the emperor who promoted him to the even higher office of postal logothete. Symeon was certainly serving as postal logothete after 976, when Basil II became senior emperor.

Apparently soon after Basil's accession, Symeon began his ambitious project to compose his new versions of the lives of the saints. Psellus says that this was an imperial commission, evidently from Basil, and that Symeon had ample assistance from a staff of secretaries.[43] By this time Symeon had become a friend of the much younger Nicephorus Uranus, born around 950. When Uranus says that the two of them read and discussed each other's writings, he may mean that he

Historians, pp. 176–77 (Procopius of Caesarea) and 270 (Hesychius of Miletus), and *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 436–37 (Sergius, youngest son of Sergius Confessor).

40 See Uranus' poem in Mercati, "Versi," p. 131.24–28, and cf. Høgel, *Symeon*, pp. 64–65.

41 See Psellus, *Encomium*, pp. 269–70 (his birth in Constantinople), 271 (his education), 273 (his distinguished and wealthy family), and 274–75 (his service as asecretis), and cf. Høgel, *Symeon*, pp. 66–68.

42 For the idea that Symeon was an "anti-Macedonian" historian, see Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 164–67, and for the idea that Symeon "was favourably disposed towards Romanos Lekapenos," see Markopoulos, "Byzantine History Writing," p. 188 and n. 31.

43 See Psellus, *Encomium*, p. 285, and Høgel, *Symeon*, pp. 89–126 (quoting Psellus on p. 93).

was one of the secretaries who assisted Symeon with his hagiographical project.[44] According to a story told a century later by the Georgian writer Ephrem Mtsire, at some point Symeon lost favor with Basil II, who took offense at a phrase used in Symeon's hagiographical compilation. Although this report cannot be considered reliable, in 985 Symeon may perhaps have lost some influence after the disgrace of Basil Lecapenus, with whom he must have worked closely for years.[45] Symeon probably died around 990, lamented by his friend Uranus in a poem that never implies Symeon had been out of favor.

Strangely, at least in the texts that have reached us, Symeon's chronicle lacks a preface but begins abruptly with the story of the Creation. The fact that the chronicle lacks book divisions also implies that Symeon was not attempting a history of the formal sort composed by Genesius, the author of *Theophanes Continuatus*, or Manuel the Protospatharius. The source or sources that Symeon used to compile the less than a third of his text on the centuries before A.D. 285 have yet to be determined securely. While Symeon's text often resembles the chronicles of George Syncellus and George the Monk, it also shows many differences and some notable additions, including otherwise unknown parts of the chronicle of Julius Africanus and the Jewish apocryphal books of the Watchers and Jubilees.[46] To judge from the later parts of his chronicle, Symeon is unlikely to have assembled these materials from several sources after diligent research. If he had only one source, it was probably the chronicle of Panodorus, which extended to A.D. 408 and seems still to have been available in Constantinople, perhaps with a continuation to 527 by Andronicus. Apparently Panodorus' chronicle, perhaps with Andronicus' continuation, had also been used in Constantinople by the author of the "Paschal Chronicle" in the seventh century, by George Syncellus, Theophanes, and George the Monk in the ninth century, and by Peter of Alexandria around 900.[47]

With 285 Symeon's main source became the lost Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829, then that epitome's further Continuation from 829 to 844. After this, Symeon's main source was the History of Basil I and Leo VI until 912, and after that the history of Manuel the Protospatharius, which Symeon probably also used to supplement the History of Basil and Leo.[48] Since Manuel the Protospatharius appears to have concluded his history with 948, where the first edition of Symeon's work also ends, Symeon seems to have added scarcely

[44] See Mercati, "Versi," especially p. 131.39–43, and further on Uranus, who is known to us mainly from his military writings of a later date but may have written on different subjects earlier, see McGeer, *Sowing*, especially pp. 80–81.

[45] See Høgel, *Symeon*, pp. 69–70. Symeon praises Basil Lecapenus in his second edition, *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 442.18–443.1.

[46] See especially W. Adler, *Time*, pp. 193–206 and 213–31 *passim*.

[47] See above, pp. 61 n. 99 ("Paschal Chronicle"), 59–60 (George Syncellus), 68–69 (Theophanes), 118 and n. 133 (George the Monk), and 123–24 and n. 9 (Peter of Alexandria).

[48] See above, pp. 110–14 (the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829 and its further Continuation from 829 to 844), 126–34 (the History of Basil and Leo), and 197–203 (Manuel the Protospatharius).

anything of his own to his first edition, which did little more than summarize his five main sources. Symeon apparently made no direct use of the works of George Syncellus, Theophanes, George the Monk, Nicetas the Paphlagonian, or Genesius, or *Theophanes Continuatus* or the *Life of Basil*. Since as protoasecretis Symeon had secretaries whom he could use as research assistants, and later used secretaries to compile his versions of saints' lives, he may not have contributed much more to the first edition of his chronicle than selecting its sources and telling a secretary or secretaries to summarize them.

What Symeon did was nonetheless of real value. Although he must have been aware of works like the *Life of Basil* and *Theophanes Continuatus*, he saw no reason to copy what their authors had already compiled. Instead he seems to have looked for the earliest sources available to him. Thus he summarized not George Syncellus but George's source, not the chronicle of George the Monk but the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829 (which George the Monk had used), the Continuation of Theophanes from 829 to 844 (which nobody else seems to have used), and the History of Basil and Leo rather than the material from it in the histories of Nicetas, Genesius, the author of *Theophanes Continuatus*, and Manuel. In the process Symeon preserved important parts of his sources that others had neglected. Apart from Africanus and the Jewish apocryphal texts, Symeon's greatest contribution was to transmit the parts of the History of Basil and Leo that reflected badly on the Macedonian dynasty, including the fact that Leo VI was the son of Michael III and not of Basil I. Symeon transmitted this information not because he disliked the Macedonian emperors but because he happened to be the first historian since the author of the History of Basil and Leo (who probably wrote under Alexander) to write about Basil and Leo without needing to worry about displeasing an emperor descended from them.

Symeon does seem to have made one addition to the first edition of his chronicle, near its end. He remarks that three high officials who betrayed Romanus I to his sons, in 944, paid for their treachery by dying miserable deaths not much later. Symeon continues, "but I shall set forth their stories at greater length and in greater detail in the preceding [*sic*] narrative." The same self-contradictory words occur in Symeon's second edition.[49] In the first edition these three men—Basil Petinus, Marianus Argyrus, and Manuel Curtices—never reappear; but in the second edition Symeon briefly describes their deaths. There he says that Basil was exiled and soon died, Marianus was killed by a woman who dropped a tile on his head, and Manuel was drowned in a shipwreck on a campaign against Crete. (Whether that of 949 or 962–63 is not specified.) Still later Symeon records that Basil Petinus died after being exiled by Romanus II in March 962. Though the preserved part of Symeon's text says no more about Marianus or Manuel, Leo the Deacon records that Marianus died in August 963, just after our text of Symeon's second edition breaks off.[50] Apparently when Symeon prepared his first edition

[49] Cf. Symeon I, 137.3, with Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, p. 436.18–19.

[50] See Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 438 (the deaths of all three described briefly) and 479.12–15 (the death of Basil in March, evidently still in the second year of

he knew that all three men had died but was unsure where to record their deaths, since he had decided to conclude his history with 948. When he absentmindedly wrote "but I shall set forth their stories … in the preceding narrative," he was still considering whether to mention the stories before this passage or after it. Then he either forgot to include them in his first edition or meant to say he would do so in his second edition, which he was already planning to write.

The second edition of Symeon's chronicle, which unlike the first includes a good deal of writing by Symeon himself, must have been finished very soon after the first. After all, even the first edition must date after the death of Marianus Argyrus, in August 963, and is likely to be several years later, since it used the history of Manuel the Protospatharius, which can hardly be earlier than 961. Symeon's second edition was evidently completed before the death of Nicephorus II in 969. If the first edition, as its title implies, was finished when Symeon was already a magister and military logothete, both editions were finished after June 968, when Symeon was still protoasecretis, and before December 969, when Nicephorus II was killed. Symeon may of course have begun work on his first edition some years earlier. The second edition apparently begins only with 842, though of course this may mean no more than that Symeon was satisfied with his first edition before 842 and intended to replace only the later part of it.

Why would Symeon have completed two versions of his chronicle within a few years at most, and more likely within a year and a half of each other? One possibility is that after finishing his first edition Symeon found it unsatisfactory and decided to revise and continue it in the second edition. If so, however, why did Symeon allow the rejected chronicle to be circulated so widely that we now have more manuscripts of it than of its revised edition? Perhaps more likely is that the first edition was a draft that Symeon had his secretary or secretaries prepare to his specifications, while planning from the start to revise and continue the more recent part of it himself. Then, after the first version was finished, Symeon circulated it among his friends for their comments, and one or more of them kept a copy that was copied in its turn. In any case, the first edition soon came into circulation and found numerous readers, who may have been especially interested in its new material and sensational revelations about Basil I and Leo VI.

Any evaluation of the second edition of Symeon's chronicle must remain tentative as long as we lack a full critical edition of the text.[51] While Symeon's revisions

Romanus II [cf. p. 479.1–2] and therefore in 961/62), and Leo the Deacon, *History* III.7 (the death of Marianus).

[51] Pending the full edition by Wahlgren that is supposed to appear as the second volume of his edition of Symeon, the published texts of parts of MSS of Symeon's second version are (1) the part of *Vaticanus graecus* 167 covering the period from 886 to 961, ed. by Bekker as Book VI of *Theophanes Continuatus*; (2) the part of *Vaticanus graecus* 153 covering the period from 842 to 948, ed. in Istrin, *Хроника* II, pp. 3–65; (3) the part of *Vaticanus graecus* 163 covering the period from 842 to 867, ed. in Featherstone, "Logothete Chronicle," pp. 420–33; and (4) the part of *Vaticanus graecus* 163 covering the period from 945 to 963, ed. in Markopoulos, "Témoignage," pp. 91–100. Note that these MSS often differ considerably from one another by rearranging or omitting parts of the material. See also

made the style of the second edition a bit more elevated than that of the first, both editions are in reasonably formal but not ostentatiously classicizing Greek and are comparatively easy to read. Even the first edition has one example of the archaic dual number, and even the second edition seldom substitutes the dual for the plural.[52] In the second edition the account of the period before 948 includes a number of passages not found in the first; most of these were apparently taken from the history of Manuel the Protospatharius, who had in his turn taken most of them from the history of Nicetas the Paphlagonian. Evidently Symeon made these additions because he considered them important or interesting. He also seems to have added a few comments of his own.

In preparing his account of the years from 842 to 912 for his second edition, Symeon apparently inserted material from Manuel's history into a narrative that had chiefly been compiled from the Continuation of Theophanes from 829 to 844 and from the History of Basil and Leo. In describing the reign of Michael III, Symeon added references to Manuel the Armenian's serving as a regent for Michael and rescuing the emperor at a supposed battle of Anzen around 861; both were fictions originally derived from the saint's life of Manuel the Armenian. The latter reference is part of a substantial addition on Michael's wars with the Arabs apparently taken from Nicetas' *Secret History* by way of Manuel the Protospatharius.[53] Symeon also added a reference to the arrest of Patriarch John the Grammarian by Constantine Maniaces, "grandfather of Genesius the patrician and chartulary of the inkwell," evidently meaning the historian Genesius, whom Symeon seems to have known personally. Symeon could nonetheless have taken this reference from Manuel the Protospatharius. Genesius' history, as transmitted by Manuel, must be the source of Symeon's report that Maniaces tried to protect the logothete Theoctistus from assassination.[54]

Markopoulos, "Sur les deux versions." Featherstone, "Theophanes Continuatus VI," has suggested that the "final redactor" of Symeon's second edition and of *De Ceremoniis* was the grand chamberlain Basil Lecapenus, because he was a "close associate of Constantine VII and denizen of the Palace … with access to Constantine's *Nachlass*" (p. 122). Especially because this description fits Symeon at least as well, the identification seems to lack much support; but Featherstone acknowledges that "the question remains open" until we have a full critical text of the second edition (and of *De Ceremoniis*), which may show whether we need to postulate any "final redactor" at all. More probably, we should simply speak of a copyist who added a portion of Symeon's second edition to serve as a continuation of *Theophanes Continuatus* Books I–IV and the *Life of Basil*, just as another copyist added a somewhat larger portion of Symeon's second edition to serve as a continuation of the chronicle of George the Monk.

52 See Symeon I, 60.5 (τὼ χεῖρε), and cf. Symeon I, 131.50.472 (τὰς χεῖρας), with Istrin, *Хроника* II, p. 16.23, and Featherstone, "Logothete Chronicle," p. 432 (ἄμφω τὼ χεῖρε).

53 Istrin, *Хроника* II, pp. 3 (Manuel's regency) and 8–10 (Michael's wars with the Arabs, with the fictional battle of Dazimon-Anzen); only the first passage appears in Featherstone, "Logothete Chronicle," p. 420. For the Life of Manuel, see above, pp. 147–48.

54 Featherstone, "Logothete Chronicle," p. 420 (the reference to Constantine and Genesius), and Istrin, *Хроника* II, p. 7 (the reference to Maniaces); in each case, the other MS omits the reference. On the historian Genesius, see above, pp. 186–87 and n. 126.

For the reign of Basil I, Symeon's second edition adds further material on Basil's wars with the Arabs and Paulicians, two references to Nicephorus II's grandfather Nicephorus Phocas the Elder, and a physical description of Basil. The account of Basil's wars, which shows clear parallels with Genesius and the *Life of Basil*, is evidently taken from Nicetas by way of Manuel. The account of the elder Nicephorus probably also comes from Manuel, who wrote when the younger Nicephorus was already an important general, though Symeon himself was presumably the one who identified Nicephorus as the later emperor. Symeon's brief description of Basil I's appearance seems again to come from Nicetas by way of Manuel, since it also appears in Pseudo-Symeon, though the failure of the *Life of Basil* to make use of it is odd, especially because it depicts Basil as quite handsome.[55] In covering Leo VI's reign, Symeon adds further treatment of the naval raids of Leo of Tripoli and more information on the general Eustathius Argyrus and his sons.[56]

For the period from 912 to 948 in the second edition, Symeon seems to have inserted additional material from Manuel's history into an account that he had originally summarized from the same source, though Symeon adds several observations of his own. For example, he mentions that the daughter of a priest who had abused the patriarch Euthymius in 912 was stricken by paralysis and remained paralyzed in Nicephorus II's reign.[57] In another addition, Symeon remarks that a priest who delivered a letter from the patriarch Nicholas to the general Constantine Ducas in 913 was the father of a certain Andrew who "in our times" became a distinguished painter.[58] Among other additions, Symeon observes that the general Leo Phocas, Nicephorus II's uncle, was "known more for his courage than for his political acumen." In recording Romanus I's decision to give his son Christopher precedence over the legitimate heir, Constantine VII, Symeon comments, "Alas for the affairs of men!"[59] As has already been noted, in his second edition Symeon includes more material about the Argyrus family and about the general John Curcuas.[60]

Since Symeon was probably in his twenties at the time of the death of Romanus I, in 948, he presumably had a few memories of Romanus' reign, or at least of what he had heard about it from older men. In his second edition Symeon relates that

[55] Istrin, *Хроника* II, pp. 19–21 (Basil's wars), 20 and 24 (references to Nicephorus the Elder), and 24 (description of Basil; cf. Pseudo-Symeon, p. 686.12–16).

[56] Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 366.11–17, 367.5–22, 368.15–369.5, and 373.14–374.19, and Istrin, *Хроника* II, pp. 31.29–33, 32.8–23, 32.33–33.5, and 35.24–33 (which is shorter than the corresponding passage in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI and omits its references to the Argyri).

[57] Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, p. 378.10–17 (not in Istrin, *Хроника* II, pp. 37–38).

[58] Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 381.18–382.7, and Istrin, *Хроника* II, p. 39.20–28. Andrew is said to have surpassed the ancient artists "Apelles, Agatharchus, Heraclides, and Philoenus [Panaenus?] the Byzantines [*sic*]."

[59] Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 388.22–23 and 400.21–401.2, and Istrin, *Хроника* II, pp. 43.17–18 (omitting the second comment).

[60] Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 399.7–11, 415.10–416.7, 424.21–22, 425.12–13, and 426.9–429.14 (all omitted in Istrin, *Хроника* II, where the text seems by this point to be copying Symeon's first edition).

in 927 an astrologer named John told Romanus that if he caused a certain statue to be beheaded the Bulgarian emperor Symeon would die, and the Bulgarian duly died when Romanus did behead it.[61] This legend seems less likely to have come from Manuel's history, which seems to have been a rather sober account based on contemporary knowledge, than from hearsay that had come into circulation by the time Symeon wrote his chronicle, around 969. Symeon is probably also responsible for dating the beginning of Constantine VII's reign as senior emperor to A.M. 6454 (945/46), because this is a year too late and by this time Manuel's chronology was apparently reliable.[62] Except for that wrong date and the tale of Romanus' astrologer, we cannot easily identify any contributions of Symeon's own to the chronicle before 948, the apparent ending of Manuel's history.

With 948 Symeon seems to have begun to compose his second edition himself. Far from being reflexively hostile to the Macedonians and favorable to the Lecapeni, he praises Constantine VII and criticizes Romanus I by clear implication:[63]

> If one intends to describe Constantine Porphyrogenitus' benevolence, beneficence, and reformation and improvement of everything, and how piously and justly he saved his subjects from misfortune, and one fears that one is unable to praise the man according to his merits, it is right rather to be silent—except that then it is also right to mention a few of his accomplishments at random out of so many. This man, discovering everything in a state of disuse and neglect, and virtuous men being abased and disdained, preferred courageous and manly men to cowardly and unmanly ones, because he loved God and virtue.

We have seen that Constantine probably gave Symeon himself his start on an official career by appointing him an asecretis and then the protoasecretis.

Symeon includes among Constantine's many excellent appointments Romanus I's bastard son Basil Lecapenus as grand chamberlain, John Curcuas as an envoy to the Arabs, the monk Polyeuctus as patriarch of Constantinople, and as senior military commanders the future emperor Nicephorus II Phocas and his father, Bardas Phocas, and brother, Leo Phocas. According to Symeon, Constantine curbed corruption, patronized education and the arts, won many great victories through his generals, and built, restored, or redecorated numerous palaces, churches, and charitable institutions. Symeon's consistent praise for Constantine's powerful minister Joseph Bringas is striking, because in 963 Bringas led the opposition to Nicephorus II, under whom Symeon was writing just five or six years later. After Bringas died in exile, in 965, Symeon evidently felt enough confidence in his own

[61] Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 411.17–412.2.

[62] Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, p. 436.3–5. Symeon may simply have assumed that Constantine's accession occurred in the year after Romanus' recognition of Constantine as his heir, an event that he correctly dates to A.M. 6453 (944/45) in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, p. 435.3–10, presumably on the basis of Manuel's history.

[63] Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, p. 445.11–20.

power and in Nicephorus' tolerance to give due credit to a man who had presumably been Symeon's friend.[64]

Symeon praises Constantine VII for advising his son Romanus to behave piously and soberly, and then for predicting to him, "If you observe these things, you will have a long life as emperor of the Romans."[65] When Symeon wrote these words, however, he and his readers already knew that Romanus II had died at the age of twenty-three after a rather dissipated reign of little more than three years. The clear implication is that Romanus misbehaved and consequently had a short life and reign. Without criticizing Romanus explicitly, Symeon notes in his account of Romanus' reign that the emperor forced his sisters to become nuns against their wishes and those of his mother Helen, and that he spent his time hunting and left warfare to Nicephorus and Leo Phocas. The Logothete adds, "And what might one say about the fearlessness and righteousness and valor and bravery and virtue of the emperor?" As proof of these qualities Symeon mentions that "in a single day" Romanus watched chariot races, dined with the senators, won a game of polo, and went hunting and "caught four huge wild boars" before returning to the palace in the evening. By the time the historian calls Romanus "the worthy, the sweet, the gentle, and whatever good names it is necessary to call and name the man," the reader can hardly fail to see the sarcasm behind the ostensible praise.[66]

Evidently when Symeon came to write history he had trouble discarding the habits he had learned from writing panegyrics, as in his poem on the death of Constantine VII in 959. Except near the end of Symeon's second edition, when the Logothete gives a brief account of Nicephorus Phocas' campaign on Crete and subsequent maneuvers, most of the coverage of the years from 948 to 963 is cast in the form of panegyrics of Constantine VII or Romanus II, even if the praise given to the latter is insincere. Symeon includes generally flattering physical descriptions of Constantine and Romanus, both of whom he surely knew well.[67] The historian also makes a number of attempts at literary elegance. He habitually uses the Homeric word for "king" to mean "emperor" and indulges in repetitious and rather silly wordplay. He even composes two short invented speeches in the classical manner, which were supposedly made by the Grand Chamberlain Joseph and by Nicephorus Phocas on Crete.[68]

[64] Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 445, 466, 469–70, 475, and 479, and Markopoulos, "Témoignage," pp. 96, 97, and 100 (noting that Bringas served with Symeon as one of the three regents in 963). On Bringas' death, see Scylitzes, p. 260 (noting that Bringas died 2 years after 963). Kazhdan, *History* II, p. 274, who seems not to realize that Markopoulos' text is derived from Symeon's chronicle, dates this passage before 963 because of its praise for Bringas. Further on Bringas, see also Kazhdan in *ODB* I, pp. 325–26.

[65] Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, p. 458.5–8.

[66] Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 472–73.

[67] Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 468.15–21 (Constantine) and 472.21–473.3 (Romanus).

[68] Symeon's first use of the Homeric word ἄναξ seems to be at *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, p. 413.13, referring to Romanus I in a passage added in the second edition; the word

Interestingly, Symeon adorns his chronicle with etymologies for the names of the city of Mesembria, the Constantinopolitan quarter of Pharus, and several other places. The etymologies for Mesembria and Pharus also appear in Pseudo-Symeon and *Theophanes Continuatus*, in parts of their accounts of the reigns of Leo V and Leo VI that are evidently derived from Nicetas' *Secret History*. Probably Symeon copied these two etymologies from material on Leo V and Leo VI that Manuel had copied from Nicetas and took the other etymologies from similar material in Nicetas' history that has not been preserved in the texts we have.[69] Otherwise Symeon's rhetoric is not very distinguished. He uses nominative absolutes and other awkward constructions, and repeatedly and pointlessly introduces items of information with variants of the phrase "It is necessary to mention."[70] Although the few dates that he supplies were recent when he wrote, he managed to get most of them wrong.[71]

Since Symeon evidently lived till 990 or so, he could easily have continued his history past 963 in a third edition. His offices of protoasecretis, military logothete, and postal logothete gave him access to all the materials and secretaries he would have needed if he had chosen to record the glorious reigns of Nicephorus Phocas and John Tzimisces. Symeon would have been under no more constraint in writing about Nicephorus II and John I under Basil II than he had been when he wrote about Constantine VII and Romanus II under Nicephorus II. Yet by Basil's reign Symeon probably realized that he had few gifts as an historian. If, as is possible, Nicephorus II had given him the assignment of writing his chronicle in the first place, the assignment that he received from Basil II, to revise the hagiography of the Byzantine Church, was better suited to Symeon's interests and abilities. If, as is also possible, Symeon had made his own decision to write his chronicle in order

reappears constantly in the account of the years from 948 to 963, beginning with p. 444.1. For wordplay, see Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 443.17 (τῶν κατὰ καιρὸν ἀκαίρων ἀπαιτήσεων), 448.5 (τοῖς δικασταῖς συνδικάζειν), 448.13–14 (δικαστὴς δι' ἑαυτοῦ ἕκαστος τῆς δικῆς τῷ ἠδικηκότι ἐγένετο), and 470.12–13 (δικαστὴς δι' ἑαυτοῦ τῆς δικῆς τῷ ἠδικηκότι ἐγένετο). The speeches appear at *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 475 (by Joseph) and 478 (by Nicephorus Phocas).

69 Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 413.3–6 (Mesembria; cf. Pseudo-Symeon, p. 706.12–15), 423.22–23 (Pharus; cf. *Theophanes Continuatus* I.10), 424.1–5 (the Euxine), 424.6–7 (Hiera), 437.16–22 (Proconnesus), 464.6–8 (Prietus), and 465.5–10 (Prusa). On Nicetas' etymologies, see above, p. 150.

70 For nominative absolutes, see Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 445.11–16 (in the interest of clarity not reproduced in my translation on p. 214 above) and 458.17–19. For phrases meaning "it is necessary to mention" (χρὴ ... ἐξειπεῖν, δεῖ ... λέγειν, etc.), see Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 448.15, 449.4, 449.10, 449.17–18, 452.21, 456.4, 456.22, 463.48, and 470.19–20.

71 See p. 214 and n. 62 above, and Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 468.23–469.2 (Constantine VII died on November 15 [a mistake for 9 or 19] of the 3rd indiction [correct], A.M. 6469 [a mistake for 6468]), 469.8–13 (Romanus II became emperor on November 6 [a mistake for 9 or 19] of the 6th indiction [a mistake for 3rd], A.M. 6469 [a mistake for 6468]), 474.1–10 (Crete had been under Arab rule for 158 years [a mistake for 138 years (824–962)?]), and 479.1–2 (a shortage of grain in October of the 2nd year of Romanus II's reign [a mistake for the 3rd year]). For our uncertainty over the date of Constantine VII's death, see Grierson, "Tombs," p. 58.

to advance his career, by the time of Basil's reign he had reached the highest office likely to be his and could enhance his literary reputation better by hagiography than by historiography.

The two editions of Symeon's chronicle must nevertheless have won their author considerable credit from his contemporaries. The chronicle presented a wealth of interesting information in a single history of convenient length in a passably refined style that was not too taxing to read. For all his defects as a writer, Symeon wrote more readably than George Syncellus, more concisely than Theophanes, and more elegantly than George the Monk. Symeon had chosen his sources well, and he avoided spoiling them in the retelling. The popularity of his chronicle must also have benefited from the fact that most of his sources were hard to find and were eventually lost altogether. Future readers and copyists did not necessarily treat Symeon's chronicle with much respect, since some revised it, continued it, excerpted it, abridged it, rearranged it, attached their own names to it, or cut and pasted it into the text of George the Monk.[72] Readers, however, found Symeon's chronicle useful, either as a reference work or as a means of readily acquiring the basic historical knowledge that they wanted in order to pass as educated men. Most of them are unlikely to have wanted much more than that from a history. Even more sophisticated scholars, Byzantine and modern alike, have found that Symeon supplies the most reliable account of the period from the early ninth to the mid-tenth century.

Pseudo-Symeon

The anonymous chronicle once attributed by some scholars to Symeon the Logothete but now known as Pseudo-Symeon is one of the most peculiar Byzantine histories.[73] In our only independent manuscript of it, the text of Pseudo-Symeon appears after the first thirty chapters of Symeon's genuine chronicle. Then the text of Pseudo-Symeon begins with neither an author's name, nor a title, nor a preface, but a simple couplet of dodecasyllable verses:[74]

> This book had Adam as its start, and its ending
> Is the pious rule of [those] born in the purple.

[72] See the list of MSS in Wahlgren, *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon* I, pp. 27*–49*.

[73] On Pseudo-Symeon, a seriously neglected writer, see Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 167–68, *PmbZ* II, *Prolegomena*, p. 9, and particularly Markopoulos, "Χρονογραφία" (too harshly reviewed by Dieten, "Chronik"). Markopoulos' dissertation is pioneering but inevitably imperfect, because it deals with a largely unpublished text (which it often cites in MS) and is too short fully to resolve the complex problems that that text presents. An edition of Pseudo-Symeon by Markopoulos for the Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae has been announced as "in preparation" since 1978, which is obviously far too long.

[74] Markopoulos, "Χρονογραφία," p. 1 n. 2:

> Ἀρχὴ [read Ἀρχὴν] μὲν Ἀδὰμ ἔσχε βίβλος καὶ τέλος
> τὸ πορφυρογέννητον εὐσεβὲς κράτος.

Here πορφυρογέννητον ... κράτος ("born-in-the-purple rule") could refer to the rule of one or more emperors who were born in the purple.

Since the chronicle ends with the reign of Romanus II, who like his father, Constantine VII, had been born to an emperor, the couplet presumably refers to the rule of Constantine and Romanus. While most Byzantine authors naturally wanted to take credit for their labors, Pseudo-Symeon apparently failed to append his own name to his chronicle, though he must have worked at least as hard at collecting and summarizing his material as many other Byzantine historians did, Symeon the Logothete included. Unusually among Byzantine historians, Pseudo-Symeon seems to have put practically none of his own prose into his compilation, unless we count some fabricated dates. Yet his is one of the lengthiest surviving Byzantine histories. His whole text is almost three times as long as the first edition of Symeon's chronicle, almost twice as long as George the Monk's chronicle, and considerably longer than the chronicles of either George Syncellus or Theophanes.

As of this writing Pseudo-Symeon's chronicle also appears to be the longest surviving Byzantine history to remain mostly unpublished, since more than four-fifths of it exists only in manuscript.[75] The portion published so far begins only with the accession of Leo V the Armenian, in 813. Because for the times before that date Pseudo-Symeon served as the almost exclusive source of the later historian George Cedrenus, nearly all the contents of Pseudo-Symeon's chronicle are actually available in Cedrenus' history, although in an antiquated edition. George, however, paraphrased Pseudo-Symeon at some times and at others may have used a somewhat more complete text than ours, though the full extent of the differences between their two histories has yet to be made clear.[76] In any case, until the whole text of Pseudo-Symeon's chronicle has been properly edited and analyzed, most of what can be deduced about it must be uncertain and provisional.

We have already seen that for the period after 813 Pseudo-Symeon seems to have used four sources: Symeon the Logothete's chronicle (after 842 in its second edition), the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829, which Symeon also consulted, and two sources not used by Symeon, the *Secret History* of Nicetas the Paphlagonian and the chronicle of Sergius Confessor. We have some reason to think that Pseudo-Symeon's text of Sergius Confessor was only a little more complete than ours.[77] The only comprehensive study of Pseudo-Symeon to date

[75] See Markopoulos, "Χρονογραφία," pp. 30–37 (describing the MS, *Parisinus graecus* 1712, which includes Pseudo-Symeon on fols. 18^v–272^r) and 39–46 (noting that the main editions, none of which is satisfactory, include only fols. 235^r–272^r). See also Wahlgren, *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon* I, p. 46* and pp. 87*–89*. Besides a few passages quoted by Markopoulos from the earlier part of the chronicle, Halkin, "Règne," has published fols. 83^r–88^v, on the reign of Constantine I, and Browning, "Notes," pp. 406–10, has published a few short passages from fols. 200^v–235^r.

[76] See Markopoulos, "Χρονογραφία," pp. 27–29 and 125 n. 35. On Cedrenus, see below, pp. 339–41.

[77] Cf. Browning, "Notes," p. 410: "We can perhaps … suggest that the fact that Pseudo-Symeon gives physical descriptions in the manner of Malalas of Michael I and Leo V, but of no preceding or following emperor, indicates that he had a text of the *Scriptor Incertus* [probably Sergius Confessor] very little longer than our own."

has identified five more sources for the period before 813: George Syncellus, John Malalas, John of Antioch, the full text of Theophanes, and a list of imperial tombs and obituaries that formed part of Constantine VII's *On Ceremonies*.[78] To this we should apparently add the ecclesiastical history of Theodore the Lector.[79] Of this total of ten sources, Malalas' chronicle is incomplete today, and six others are largely lost: the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829, Sergius Confessor, Nicetas' *Secret History*, John of Antioch, the list from *On Ceremonies*, and Theodore the Lector. The unpublished part of Pseudo-Symeon seems likely to contain unpublished fragments from Nicetas' *Secret History*, John of Antioch, Theodore the Lector, and the missing Greek text of the list from *On Ceremonies*.[80]

Many of the peculiarities of Pseudo-Symeon's chronicle presumably derive from its sources, especially the rather odd chronicle of Sergius Confessor and the even stranger *Secret History* of Nicetas the Paphlagonian. Pseudo-Symeon seems to have excerpted both of these in a way that preserved much of their original wording. Then he combined them with other, disparate materials without exercising much literary ability or critical sense. His text is unusually disjointed, jumbling together sober narrative, incorrect dates, physical descriptions, prophecies, portents, snatches of poetry, learned etymologies, and invectives against iconoclasts and against Photius. Pseudo-Symeon often abridges his sources drastically, sometimes to the point of unintelligibility—for example, taking what must originally have been a report on raids by the Arabs and the Rus' and reducing it to an incoherent series of etymologies.[81] The chronicler apparently had a special taste for the supernatural, because

[78] See Markopoulos, "Χρονογραφία," especially pp. 54–60 (George Syncellus), 61–65 (John Malalas), 66–73 (John of Antioch), 74–87 (the "Epitome"; cf. my rather different interpretation of this work as the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829, above, p. 110 and n. 108), 111–15 (Theophanes), 115–24 (the list of tombs and obituaries), 152–59 (the *Scriptor Incertus* = Sergius Confessor; cf. my discussion above, pp. 90–100), and 163–70 (Nicetas the Paphlagonian's *Secret History*; cf. my discussion above, pp. 134–51).

[79] While Theophanes himself presumably used the full text of Theodore the Lector, Pseudo-Symeon (as copied by Cedrenus) evidently used more of Theodore's text than Theophanes did. Cf. Cedrenus I, pp. 609–11 (a fire in Constantinople), with Theodore the Lector fr. 394 and Theophanes A.M. 5954, p. 112; cf. Cedrenus I, pp. 615–16 (the rebellion of Basiliscus), with Theodore the Lector frs. 401–2 and Theophanes A.M. 5967, pp. 120–21; cf. Cedrenus I, p. 68 (on Theoderic "the African" and an orthodox deacon), with Theodore the Lector fr. 463 and Theophanes A.M. 5991, p. 142; and cf. Cedrenus I, pp. 631–32 (the conversion of the Saracen Alamundarus), with Theodore the Lector fr. 513 and Theophanes A.M. 6005, pp. 159–60. On Theodore, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 169–74.

[80] Otherwise the *Necrologium* from *On Ceremonies* survives only in an adapted Latin translation and a Greek palimpsest; see Grierson, "Tombs," especially pp. 61–63 (an additional note by Cyril Mango and Ihor Ševčenko). The missing mention of Heraclonas' burial from the *Necrologium* that I postulated in Treadgold, "Note," p. 433, is probably preserved by Pseudo-Symeon as found in Cedrenus I, p. 754.4–6: ὁ δὲ Ἡρακλωνᾶς οὐκ ἐτάφη βασιλικῶς, ἀλλὰ διωχθεὶς ἐκ τῆς βασιλείας καὶ ἰδιωτεύων ἐτάφη ἐν τῷ μοναστηρίῳ σὺν τῇ μητρὶ Μαρτίνᾳ.

[81] Cf. Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 705–7, with Jenkins, "Supposed Russian Attack." For another example of inept excerpting, cf. Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 643–45, with Treadgold, "Prophecies," especially pp. 234–36.

he seems to have included more of the miraculous elements in Nicetas' *Secret History* than the other historians who used it do. The level of Pseudo-Symeon's style varies with his sources. Probably if he had had some higher education, he would have composed more skillfully; but if he had had less than a secondary education, he would have been unable to collect and transmit his sources as well as he did. Perhaps what he lacked most was not education but intelligence.

Pseudo-Symeon evidently copied Theophanes' dates for the Alexandrian era of the world and for Christ's Incarnation, converting them into each emperor's regnal years until the conclusion of Theophanes' chronicle in 813, which Theophanes counted as A.M. 6305 and A.D. 805.[82] After that, Pseudo-Symeon dates Leo V's accession to A.M. 6307 (814/15), two years too late, seemingly because he added the two years of Michael I's reign to the date of Theophanes' last entry, in which those years were already counted.[83] Then Pseudo-Symeon added to his wrong date for Leo's accession the length of the next nine imperial reigns, some of which he got slightly wrong, until finally he dates Romanus II's accession to A.M. 6456 (963/64), four years too late.[84] Though no doubt all these incorrect dates resulted from honest mistakes made by the chronicler, they show an habitual carelessness and a systematic failure to check his results against chronological data that must have been available to him.

Much worse than this, Pseudo-Symeon is notorious for having simply invented dates for events during the reigns of Theophilus, Michael III, Basil I, and Leo VI. First, ignoring chronology, Pseudo-Symeon combined his summary of Symeon's chronicle with passages from Nicetas' *Secret History* and the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829, three texts that included only a few dates in the first place. Into this mishmash Pseudo-Symeon arbitrarily inserted regnal years at the beginnings of paragraphs in such forms as, "In his second year," "In his third year," "In his fourth year," and so on, following the practice he had adopted for dates taken from Theophanes before 813. Because the ninth century is a period

[82] See Browning, "Notes," p. 407, citing fol. 232r (where ,ςτο' must be a misprint for ,ςτδ') for the beginning of the reign of Michael I, which corresponds to Theophanes A.M. 6304.

[83] Cf. Pseudo-Symeon, p. 603, with Theophanes A.M. 6305.

[84] According to our published text, Basil I took power in A.M. 6362 and reigned nineteen years (Pseudo-Symeon, p. 686), Leo VI took power in A.M. 6388 and reigned twenty-five years nine months (Pseudo-Symeon, p. 700), and Alexander took power in A.M. 6407 and reigned one year twenty-nine days (Pseudo-Symeon, p. 715). These numbers add up only if Pseudo-Symeon originally calculated that Leo VI took power in A.M. 6381 (6362 + 19 = 6381, 6381 + 26 = 6407); but we should not simply emend ,ςτπη' to ,ςτπα' at Pseudo-Symeon, p. 700.6, because the reading of A.M. 6388 is confirmed by the year of the Incarnation given there (888). Seemingly Pseudo-Symeon himself miscopied a total that he had calculated correctly. Then, according to our text, Constantine VII began his reign in A.M. 6408 and reigned seven years with regents, twenty-six years with Romanus I, and fifteen years alone, for a total of forty-eight years (Pseudo-Symeon, p. 718), then took power from Romanus I in A.M. 6454 with no new length of reign given (Pseudo-Symeon, p. 753), while Romanus II took power in A.M. 6456 and reigned three years, three months, and five days (Pseudo-Symeon, p. 756). These numbers would add up if we emend ,ςυνδ' (6454) to ,ςτμα' (6441) at Pseudo-Symeon, p. 753.2; but since that emendation is not a plausible one, we should probably conclude that Pseudo-Symeon made another careless error.

for which exact dates are poorly recorded and hard to conjecture, even some excellent modern scholars have mistakenly thought that Pseudo-Symeon may sometimes have had grounds for his chronology, so that several erroneous dates derived from his chronicle continue to be repeated in the modern secondary literature.[85] Because Pseudo-Symeon must have known that the dates he had made up were worthless, his motives for introducing them are somewhat obscure.

Pseudo-Symeon's chronicle surely took some time to produce, given its length and the number of its sources. It must have been finished at least several years later than the second edition of Symeon the Logothete's chronicle was completed, evidently in or around 969, the date of the death of Nicephorus II. Although Pseudo-Symeon made a particularly radical abridgment of the section of Symeon's chronicle dealing with Constantine VII's sole reign, what Pseudo-Symeon omits is largely panegyric, which he may reasonably have felt was unnecessary in a chronicle. While also omitting most of what Symeon says about Nicephorus Phocas, Pseudo-Symeon concludes his work with Nicephorus' capture of Aleppo, which gives that victory a certain prominence. Even Pseudo-Symeon's scanty selection of Symeon's material leaves a generally favorable impression of Constantine VII, Romanus II, Nicephorus II, and the grand chamberlain Basil Lecapenus, who was disgraced in 985 and exiled the year after that.[86]

Significantly, Pseudo-Symeon omits even the little that Symeon the Logothete includes about John Tzimisces, suggesting that Pseudo-Symeon wrote after John's death in 976 and wanted to avoid controversy. Finally, almost the only passage that Pseudo-Symeon seems to have written himself for his chronicle reads, "It should be known that in the fourteenth year of the rule of Constantine Porphyrogenitus (for he ruled fifteen years), the emperor Basil [II], Constantine's grandson and his son Romanus' son, was born."[87] The reticence Pseudo-Symeon shows in recording contemporary events may indicate that he finished his chronicle during Basil II's hard-fought civil war with Tzimisces' ally Bardas Sclerus between 976 and 979, when Basil Lecapenus was the power behind the emperor's throne. The cautiously favorable treatment Pseudo-Symeon gives to Nicephorus II may further suggest a

[85] Among the warnings that have often been disregarded since 1912 are those of Bury, *History*, p. 459 ("It is important to observe that the chronological data by which this chronicle is distinguished are worthless. …"), and of Jenkins, "Chronological Accuracy," p. 91 n. 3 ("It may here be remarked, once for all, that Pseudo-Symeon's allocations of events among regnal years is altogether arbitrary and misleading. His chronology is wrong nine times out of ten, and if he is right the tenth time, he is so by mere accident."). Modern secondary works are especially likely to repeat the date of 837 for the accession of the patriarch John the Grammarian from Pseudo-Symeon, p. 635.1–5, instead of the correct date of April 21, 838. (See the discussions in Treadgold, "Chronological Accuracy," pp. 178–79, and *Byzantine Revival*, p. 441 n. 406.) For another modern error caused by Pseudo-Symeon, see p. 172 n. 68 above.

[86] See, e.g., Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 754.22–755.1 (Basil Lecapenus), 756.13–16 (Constantine VII), 756.21–757.3 (Romanus II), and 759.6–7 (Nicephorus Phocas).

[87] Pseudo-Symeon, p. 755.20–23.

date for the chronicle between 978 and 979, when Nicephorus' nephew Bardas Phocas was fighting for Basil II.[88]

Since a date around 978 cannot be very far wrong, when Pseudo-Symeon compiled his chronicle Symeon the Logothete was presumably still alive and active, probably serving as postal logothete and perhaps already working on his great hagiographical project. Pseudo-Symeon had access to some texts that must have been rare at the time and are largely or partly lost today but were certainly available to the researchers sponsored by Constantine VII: Nicetas' *Secret History*, the damaged chronicle of Sergius Confessor, the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829, the chronicles of John of Antioch and John Malalas, and the list of tombs and obituaries in *On Ceremonies*. These works are highly unlikely to have been available in any single place but the imperial palace. Pseudo-Symeon is therefore likely to have worked with access to the palace library and with Symeon the Logothete's knowledge. Probably Pseudo-Symeon also had Symeon's consent, because Symeon was an important person whom no researcher in the palace would have wished to offend. Deference to Symeon may well explain why Pseudo-Symeon did not venture to attach his own name to a work that might reasonably be considered a revision of Symeon's chronicle.

One plausible explanation for these puzzling facts—though not necessarily the only explanation—is that soon after Symeon finished the second edition of his chronicle and heard the reactions of his readers he concluded that his work was unsatisfactory even in its revised form. Then Symeon decided that some parts of the work could better be summarized and that other parts ought to include material from Nicetas' *Secret History*, Sergius Confessor, John of Antioch, John Malalas, Theodore the Lector, and the list of tombs and obits, some or all of which Symeon may have discovered in the meantime. He may also have felt that his treatment of the chronology of the period after 813 needed to be made more precise and that his panegyrical treatment of Constantine VII was unsuitable for a chronicle. Too busy with his official duties and hagiographical research to make such extensive changes himself, Symeon may have given the task to an imperial secretary, who after a few years of work, perhaps with the help of other secretaries, produced around 978 the chronicle that we call Pseudo-Symeon. The secretary, lacking sources that would allow him to date events after 813 as Symeon had requested, may simply have made up the dates and hoped that nobody would notice. This kind of chronicle, a more or less official commission based on Symeon's chronicle with excerpts from other works and practically nothing new, would not really have had an author in the usual sense of the word, and may accordingly have been left anonymous and untitled.

In any case, the chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon was a large-scale historical compilation not unlike the *Historical Excerpts*, the *Life of Basil*, and *Theophanes Continuatus*, none of which covered recent events or is assigned an author in our manuscripts. The *Historical Excerpts* may also have lacked a title. The chronicle of

[88] See Treadgold, *History*, pp. 513–16. On Pseudo-Symeon's caution, see also below, pp. 232–33.

Pseudo-Symeon could even be considered a sort of completion of the historiographical projects begun under Constantine VII and continued by Symeon, who had evidently begun his career under Constantine and knew and admired that emperor as a patron of learning. The *Historical Excerpts*, *Theophanes Continuatus*, the *Life of Basil*, and the works of Genesius, Symeon the Logothete, and Pseudo-Symeon all appear to have been compiled by imperial officeholders in the palace with at least some degree of official sponsorship. Constantine seems to have employed his protoasecretis Theodore Daphnopates as a sort of official historian, so that when Symeon became protoasecretis he considered writing history to be a duty appropriate to his position. Although we know very little about the history of Manuel the Protospatharius, he too was serving as an imperial official and had almost certainly served under Constantine VII, and his history may possibly have been sponsored in some way by Romanus II, despite that emperor's usual indifference to scholarship.

These historians seem to have formed a sort of circle. Constantine VII, Theodore Daphnopates, Joseph Genesius, Manuel the Protospatharius, and Symeon the Logothete must all have been personally acquainted. All five seem to have been born between 900 and 925, and all four of the officials seem to have lived past the end of Constantine's reign, in 959. All these officials evidently served under Constantine in the higher ranks of a central administration not much larger than six hundred men.[89] Constantine appears to have commissioned both Daphnopates and Genesius to write their histories. Daphnopates had probably succeeded Symeon's father or grandfather as protoasecretis, then was succeeded by Symeon as protoasecretis in his turn; and Symeon became military logothete not long after Daphnopates had held the same office. Apparently Daphnopates corresponded with Joseph Genesius' father, Thomas, and Symeon wrote approvingly about both Thomas Genesius and Joseph Genesius' son Romanus. Pseudo-Symeon was probably a lower-ranking secretary who knew at least some of the other four officials and may have previously worked on Symeon's chronicle. Pseudo-Symeon, like the other four, probably did research in the palace library, and some or all of the five may have collaborated on Constantine's *Historical Excerpts*.

Constantine VII inspired a series of scholarly projects that continued after his reign and extended beyond historiography. Later examples include the anonymous encyclopedia called the *Suda*, several dictionaries, the hagiographical works that Symeon the Logothete compiled as Symeon Metaphrastes, and the *Menologium* of Basil II.[90] Unlike some of these other projects, the official histories of the type that Constantine inaugurated seem to have been written over a period of only some thirty-five years, starting with the beginning of the research for the

[89] In Treadgold, *Byzantine State Finances*, pp. 41–46 and 111–14, I calculate that the central bureaucracy had about 605 men in the year 899; cf. Kazhdan and McCormick, "Social World," pp. 175–76, who generally agree with my conclusions.

[90] The best general account is still Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, pp. 309–53, but for the *Suda* now see the studies in Zecchini, *Lessico Suda*, and for Symeon's hagiographical work now see Høgel, *Symeon*, with pp. 150–56 on later menologia, including that of Basil II.

Historical Excerpts and ending with the completion of the chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon. Yet the effects of these histories on the development of Byzantine historiography lasted much longer. They provided a more or less definitive historical record up to the mid-tenth century for future historiography to build upon, and they reinforced the idea among future emperors and officials that writing history was an important endeavor that could and should be rewarded with promotions and prestige.

Not even by Byzantine standards is any of these histories a major work of literature. Apart from the fact that none of their authors happened to be a very skillful writer, all their histories are primarily works of scholarship. The reason was partly a matter of literary fashion and of Constantine VII's preferences, but also partly the result of the nature of recent historical events. Although the empire had no longer been fighting for its existence since 718, until the late tenth century the Byzantines were unable to crush their enemies outright. The empire's wars with the Arabs and Bulgarians burned themselves out without decisive victories on either side; the Iconoclast controversy ended with some rather dubious administrative measures, not with an ecumenical council; and no one was entirely happy with the compromises that had ended the Photian Schism and the dispute over Leo VI's fourth marriage. Byzantine demographic and economic gains had been so gradual as to be almost invisible to contemporaries, who paid scant attention to demographics and economics in any case. Since these circumstances did not lend themselves to grand narratives, most historians recorded individual events, facts, anecdotes, and personalities in an episodic form without reaching any real climax or resolution. Although in the mid-tenth century the triumphs of Nicephorus Phocas and John Tzimisces began a period of more dramatic events, most of those were recorded only by later historians.

7
Historians of the Age of Expansion

In retrospect, the years roughly from 950 to 1050 were a Byzantine century, when Byzantium became the greatest power in the Western world and a promising subject for its historians to celebrate. Yet contemporaries often fail to see which advances or setbacks are temporary and which represent lasting change. If today we may be too ready to believe that whatever has just happened will transform the future, the Byzantines, conservative by tradition and used to a far slower pace of change than ours, were more likely to overlook the significance of new events than to exaggerate it. Of course they saw and welcomed their victories over the Arabs and the increasing quiescence of the Bulgarians after 925; but the Arabs and Bulgarians had suffered defeats before yet recovered to attack the empire, and soon they did recover under the Fatimids and the Cometopuli. Certainly the Byzantines realized that their state had become quite strong and prosperous; but it had been quite strong and prosperous for some time, and was nonetheless weaker and poorer than it had been in late antiquity, as all educated Byzantines knew. Only in the later part of the tenth century did many Byzantines begin to see that the empire's fortunes had taken a decisive turn for the better.

Byzantine historiography had also been slowly regaining its sixth-century status as a major branch of literature. From the middle of the seventh century to the middle of the tenth, few if any historians attempted to write in the grand classical manner. The longest histories were the complementary chronicles of George Syncellus and Theophanes Confessor, neither of whom took much care with his style or composition. The few historians with greater literary ambitions either wrote histories of modest scope, like Trajan the Patrician and the patriarch Nicephorus, or, like Sergius Confessor and Nicetas the Paphlagonian, used a style that well-educated Byzantines found grating. Then the compilation of Constantine VII's *Historical Excerpts* made the old classical and classicizing historians more accessible to readers and writers, and consequently more fashionable. Theodore Daphnopates (or whoever wrote the *Life of Basil* and the first four books of *Theophanes Continuatus*) wrote at length in classicizing Greek. The chronicles of Symeon the Logothete and Pseudo-Symeon were also long, and composed in a style that was passable by classical standards. Although none of these historians wrote classicizing contemporary histories on the model of Procopius or Agathias,

recent events had supplied no military victories as brilliant as those historians had recorded. After Nicephorus Phocas and John Tzimisces won such victories, they soon found a classicizing historian, and probably two of them.

Nicephorus the Deacon and the History to 971

John Scylitzes summarized most of the first part of his history from the histories now preserved in a manuscript of around the year 1000, which Scylitzes presumably found in a similar manuscript.[1] Our manuscript contains Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus*, the *Life of Basil*, and the second edition of Symeon the Logothete's chronicle from 886 to 963; together, these texts provide a continuous account of Byzantine history from 813 to 963. By and large Scylitzes did little more than paraphrase the three texts and supplement them with material from Genesius' *On Imperial Reigns* until he reached the deposition of Romanus I, in 944.[2] After 944, even though the second edition of Symeon's chronicle continued up to 963, Scylitzes began to use a different source, now lost, which took a less favorable view of Constantine VII and Nicephorus II than Symeon had done. Scylitzes seems to have shared this source with Pseudo-Symeon for a single incident datable to 931, then to have shared the same source with Leo the Deacon's surviving *History* for events from 969 to 971. This common source of Scylitzes, Pseudo-Symeon, and Leo the Deacon apparently concluded with 971, because after that year neither Scylitzes nor Leo knew much about the rest of the reign of John Tzimisces up to his death in 976, which included extensive campaigning in Syria.[3]

Because Leo the Deacon was a member of the court and wrote when the years from 944 to 971 were within living memory, he could have combined literary sources with oral sources and his own reminiscences. He also had a reason not to copy sources that criticized earlier members of the reigning Macedonian dynasty. By contrast, Scylitzes, writing more than a century after 971 when the Macedonian dynasty was extinct, could have had no oral sources for this period and no particular reason to praise or condemn the people who had lived then. Since Scylitzes did little more than paraphrase written sources up to 944, he seems likely to have continued the same method of composition, as he implied by calling his work *Synopsis of Histories*. He ought therefore to be a fairly reliable guide to the contents of his lost source or sources from 944 to 971, and from his text we should be able to make reasonable conjectures about the number and character of his sources.

[1] Our MS is *Vaticanus graecus* 167 (described by Ševčenko, *Chronographiae ... liber*, pp. 14*–17*)—which, however, has many more lacunae than the similar text used by Scylitzes; see above, p. 171 n. 63.

[2] On Scylitzes' method, see especially Holmes, *Basil II*, pp. 91–119 and 125–52 (comparing Scylitzes' account of the years from 920 to 944 with his source, the second edition of Symeon's chronicle, which Holmes calls *Theophanes Continuatus*), and Kiapidou, *Σύνοψη*, pp. 65–88.

[3] This source, called Scylitzes' "unknown source" by Kiapidou, *Σύνοψη*, pp. 89–110, has been variously described and labeled Source A by Kazhdan, "Из истории 2," pp. 112–15, Tinnefeld, *Kategorien*, pp. 108–18, and Flusin, "Re-writing History," pp. xx–xxi.

Although Scylitzes mentions Leo the Deacon's *History*, most of his account is obviously independent of Leo, and the scanty parallels between Scylitzes and Leo seem to show a common source rather than Scylitzes' use of Leo.[4]

Scylitzes begins his narrative of Constantine VII's reign after 944 with a short description of that emperor's earlier life.[5] Since Scylitzes has already described Constantine's earlier life at length from Symeon's chronicle, this redundant description presumably came from Scylitzes' new source, which briefly summarized previous events before it began its main narrative with 944. According to this later summary, Romanus I had violated his own "most fearsome oaths" by making himself and his son Christopher emperors ahead of Constantine VII. After Christopher's death, Constantine tricked Romanus' son Stephen into deposing his father, despite the warnings of Stephen's wiser brother Constantine. Then Stephen plotted against both his brother Constantine and his brother-in-law Constantine VII, who, incited by his wife, Helen Lecapena, against her own brothers, seized and exiled both of them and took power for himself. Stephen at least bore his captivity patiently, but Constantine Lecapenus rashly murdered one of his jailers and was killed. Thus Scylitzes explicitly or implicitly criticizes Romanus I for perjury, Stephen for stupidity, Helen for disloyalty to her brothers, and Constantine Lecapenus for recklessness.[6]

According to Scylitzes, Constantine VII was drunken, lazy, and vindictive, though an admirable patron of learning and the Church. Badly advised by his wife, Helen, and his chamberlain Basil Lecapenus, Constantine carelessly appointed bad men to the empire's main civil and military offices, apparently including Bardas Phocas and his sons, Nicephorus and Leo.[7] Later Scylitzes denounces Bardas Phocas for passivity and corruption, though he admits that Nicephorus and Leo Phocas were better than Bardas and defeated the Arabs. In reporting the death of the patriarch Theophylact Lecapenus in 956, Scylitzes berates him at length for his irreligious behavior. Almost the only figure to be praised in this part of Scylitzes' chronicle is the new patriarch, Polyeuctus, who is said to have criticized Constantine VII, Helen Lecapena, and Basil Lecapenus.[8] Finally Scylitzes accuses Constantine's son Romanus II of poisoning his father, whose death was foreshadowed by stones hurled from Heaven.[9]

Next Scylitzes describes Romanus II as thoroughly dissipated, dependent on his grand chamberlain, Joseph Bringas, and particularly fond of a worthless eunuch who was upbraided by the virtuous Patriarch Polyeuctus. Romanus dispatched

[4] See p. 239 and n. 58 below.

[5] Scylitzes, pp. 233–34.

[6] Scylitzes, pp. 234–37.

[7] Scylitzes, pp. 237–38. On p. 238 Scylitzes and not his source seems to have made the mistake that Constantine VII had castrated Basil Lecapenus (who was actually castrated by his own father, Romanus I), because Scylitzes has just said, apparently copying his source, that Constantine relied heavily on Basil's bad advice, as he would have been unlikely to do if he had castrated Basil.

[8] Scylitzes, pp. 240–44.

[9] Scylitzes, pp. 246–47.

Nicephorus Phocas to take Crete, but after it was conquered, recalled him because of a prophecy that the conqueror of Crete would become emperor.[10] Meanwhile cattle throughout the empire suffered from a disease that had allegedly begun when a marble bull's head was dug up and destroyed during the reign of Romanus I.[11] After sending Nicephorus Phocas against Beroea (modern Aleppo), Romanus II died, either exhausted by his debauchery or poisoned.[12] Despite his native abilities, Romanus II had been misled into self-indulgence by his corrupt advisers.

Romanus' widow, Theophano, was therefore left to rule for her underage sons, Basil II and Constantine VIII. Although Joseph Bringas suspected Nicephorus Phocas of aspiring to the throne, Nicephorus tricked him by swearing deceptive oaths. Meanwhile Theophano had the exiled Stephen Lecapenus murdered.[13] Scylitzes reports two versions of how Nicephorus gained the throne. Either Bringas tried to make an alliance against Nicephorus with John Tzimisces, who informed Nicephorus and insisted that he proclaim himself emperor, or else (in the version Scylitzes prefers) Nicephorus had already plotted with Theophano to seize power. In any event, Nicephorus proclaimed himself emperor and marched on Constantinople, where he defied Bringas and was crowned co-emperor with the support of Basil Lecapenus.[14]

Nicephorus exiled Bringas, sent Theophano away briefly, but then, "putting aside his mask and his playacting," married her. Before this Nicephorus had claimed to be abstaining from meat, but this may have been a mere pretense, and he now abandoned it. The patriarch Polyeuctus objected to the marriage because Nicephorus had stood godfather for one of Theophano's sons, making the couple spiritual relatives; but a priest falsely swore that this report was untrue. Scylitzes now introduces an expedition against the Arabs of Sicily with a digression on the Arabs of the West. Things had gone well "while the land had prudent and just governors" under Romanus I, who made a truce with the Arabs; but "when the administration was entrusted to unjust and greedy men" under Constantine VII, the truce broke down. Constantine rejected negotiations and sent oppressive commanders to Italy, whom the Arabs overwhelmed. Later, after the Arab fleet had been destroyed in a storm, the Arabs made peace. Nicephorus II now broke the peace with an expedition under another worthless commander, which the Arabs annihilated.[15]

Meanwhile John Tzimisces, as domestic of the East, won a victory in Cilicia that "greatly exalted John's reputation and became the cause of the final downfall of the Saracens." Scylitzes gives a somewhat grudging description of Nicephorus'

[10] Scylitzes, pp. 248–50.
[11] Scylitzes, pp. 251–52.
[12] Scylitzes, pp. 252–53.
[13] Scylitzes, pp. 254–55.
[14] Scylitzes, pp. 256–59. Both versions of how Nicephorus became emperor apparently came from the lost source.
[15] Scylitzes, pp. 260–67.

own victories, observing that the emperor "did not dare" to attack Tarsus and Mopsuestia when winter was approaching, that the besieged Arabs of Tarsus inflicted heavy losses on Leo Phocas' men in a sally, and that Nicephorus failed to conquer Antioch.[16] Scylitzes reports that despite many victories and conquests Nicephorus "was detested by everyone, and all longed to see his overthrow." The emperor supposedly avoided taking Antioch, and ordered his generals not to take it, because of a prophecy that he would die when it fell. After Michael Burtzes took the city anyway, Nicephorus angrily dismissed him.[17]

The people hated Nicephorus because he was ungrateful, had let his men plunder Constantinople at his accession, made oppressive requisitions for his army, cut payments to officials and religious institutions, and outlawed donations to the Church. Worse still, Nicephorus demanded power over selecting bishops and tried to have soldiers who died in battle honored as martyrs, though the bishops bravely prevented such an outrage. He also minted a lightweight gold coin, the tetarteron, which he used for payments while collecting the full-weight nomisma in taxes. Even worse, Nicephorus built a wall around the Great Palace, destroying many fine structures in order to ward off a prophecy that he would die there. On Easter, some of Nicephorus' Armenian soldiers fought and killed many sailors of the Imperial Fleet. Soon afterward, the emperor staged military games in the Hippodrome that panicked the spectators, causing many deaths, which he regarded with indifference. He was happy to sell wheat at high prices during a severe famine. This list of reasons for Nicephorus' unpopularity, though partly corroborated by Leo the Deacon, is blatantly hostile and includes some serious distortions.[18]

The first time Scylitzes shows obvious and significant parallels with Leo the Deacon is in their account of Nicephorus' assassination, in 969, by plotters led by John Tzimisces. This account, without quite exculpating Tzimisces, is much more sympathetic to him than may seem justified.[19] Scylitzes observes that

[16] Scylitzes, pp. 267–69 and 271.

[17] Scylitzes, pp. 271–73.

[18] Scylitzes, pp. 273–78. Nicephorus did not in fact outlaw donations to religious institutions, but only donations of land and foundations of major new institutions (Treadgold, *History*, pp. 499–500). Scylitzes' account also seems to distort both Nicephorus' proposal concerning soldiers killed in battle (see Treadgold, "Byzantium," pp. 219–20) and his introduction of the tetarteron (see Treadgold, *Byzantium*, pp. 139–41). Leo the Deacon, *History* IV.6, describes the deaths at the military games as an accident (but admits that they made Nicephorus unpopular), blames the profiteering in wheat on Nicephorus' brother Leo (but admits that people blamed both brothers), acknowledges that Nicephorus' taxes were burdensome, and explains that Nicephorus built his wall around the palace because the prophecy mentioned his being killed there, not just dying there. Leo the Deacon, *History* IV.7, describes a fight on Ascension Day in which Armenian soldiers injured some of the people of Constantinople, apparently not fatally, but this may be a different incident from the one mentioned by Scylitzes.

[19] Cf. Scylitzes, pp. 279–81, with Leo the Deacon, *History* V.6–8. The parallels, not noted in the apparatus to Thurn's edition of Scylitzes, are listed in Ljubarskij, "Nikephoros," pp. 250–52, except for one parallel between Scylitzes, pp. 280–81 (at the end of the account),

Tzimisces allied himself with Basil Lecapenus, who had been Nicephorus' ally but now exiled Nicephorus' other supporters and recalled those whom Nicephorus had exiled, especially the bishops who had refused to accept his outrageous law against the Church. Forbidden by Patriarch Polyeuctus to enter St. Sophia because of Nicephorus' murder, Tzimisces gently explained that not he but two others had actually done the deed on the orders of Theophano. Tzimisces agreed to the patriarch's demands that he exile Theophano and the two assassins and tear up Nicephorus' law on donations, thus restoring the Church to "its former liberty." After also promising to give his private fortune to the poor, Tzimisces was crowned by Polyeuctus on Christmas Day 969.[20]

According to Scylitzes, Tzimisces found the empire in a deplorable state. Nicephorus' conquests in the East were not yet secure, and their peoples were contemplating rebellion; the Rus', whom Nicephorus had unwisely encouraged to invade Bulgaria, now threatened the empire itself; and a famine had been raging for five years. The new emperor carefully considered what should be done. He appointed as patriarch of Antioch an admirable monk who had predicted Tzimisces' accession, and chose as patriarch of Constantinople another admirable monk, Basil Scamandrenus, to succeed Polyeuctus, who died soon after crowning Tzimisces. When the Arabs besieged Antioch with a hundred thousand men, the emperor sent an army that defeated them, even though the Arabs outnumbered it ten to one. Thus he secured all the new Byzantine possessions in the East.[21]

The Rus', having decided to remain in Bulgaria, rebuffed an embassy from Tzimisces and allied themselves with the Bulgarians, Pechenegs, and Hungarians, raising an army of 308,000 men. The emperor dispatched twelve thousand men under his brother-in-law Bardas Sclerus, who killed most of the Pechenegs and defeated the Rus'. Sclerus was then recalled to suppress a revolt led by Nicephorus' nephew Bardas Phocas, who surrendered. Tzimisces mercifully exiled Bardas Phocas, his father, Leo, and Bardas' brother, Nicephorus, without blinding them as they deserved for their part in the revolt. Tzimisces married Constantine VII's daughter, Theodora, to the enthusiastic approval of the people of Constantinople.[22] After making excellent preparations, Tzimisces marched against the Rus', defeated them repeatedly (though they now had 330,000 men), and besieged them in Dorostolum (modern Dristra). Meanwhile Leo and Nicephorus Phocas plotted again and were blinded, and an ancient inscription was discovered that read "Many years to John and Theodora, the friends of Christ," though the writer admits that this may have been a hoax.[23] Finally Tzimisces decisively defeated

and Leo the Deacon, *History* V.6 (at the beginning). For arguments that this account is sympathetic to Tzimisces, see Morris, "Succession," pp. 210–11.

[20] Scylitzes, pp. 284–86. For the suggestion that the incorrect ages given for Basil II and Constantine VIII on p. 284 are the fault of Scylitzes rather than his source, see below, p. 234 n. 35.

[21] Scylitzes, pp. 286–87.

[22] Scylitzes, pp. 287–94.

[23] Scylitzes, pp. 294–303. Cf. Scylitzes, pp. 281.49 (οὐκ ἔχω λέγειν, expressing doubts that Nicephorus II was warned about his impending assassination in 969) and 303.73

the Rus' with the help of a man on a white horse, who must have been the ancient martyr St. Theodore Stratelates. After the Rus' made peace and withdrew, Tzimisces celebrated a glorious triumph in Constantinople.[24]

At this point the obvious parallels between Scylitzes and Leo the Deacon cease. Scylitzes' next few sentences may still come from the same source, because they are favorable to Tzimisces, describing how he restored the palatine church of Christ the Savior in Chalce (also mentioned by Leo the Deacon), reduced taxes, and struck bronze coins with the image of the Savior, probably in 970. Yet the sentence after that presumably comes from a different source, because it mentions the trial and deposition in December 973 of the patriarch Basil, whom Scylitzes has praised earlier but now fails to defend.[25] In any case, Scylitzes devotes about ten times as much space to the first two years of Tzimisces' reign as to the last four, although those last four years were filled with momentous events. Leo the Deacon gives Tzimisces' first two years about four times as much space as the last four, or about seven times if we ignore a long digression on events after 976. Scylitzes devotes almost five times as much space per year to the whole period from 944 to 971 as to the four years from 972 to 976. Moreover, the short accounts that Leo and Scylitzes do supply of the eventful years from 972 to 976 show no parallels with each other. Therefore the detailed source that Leo and Scylitzes used until 971 seems to have ended with that year.

This conclusion is supported by the sentiments Scylitzes seems to have taken over from his source or sources for events from 944 to 971. Scylitzes expresses a poor opinion of Constantine VII, Romanus II, Nicephorus II, Basil Lecapenus, the empress Helen Lecapena, the empress Theophano, and Joseph Bringas—in fact, more or less every member of the Lecapenus and Phocas families and the Macedonian dynasty. The only prominent figures whom Scylitzes consistently praises are John Tzimisces, Tzimisces' brother-in-law Bardas Sclerus, Patriarch Polyeuctus (who crowned Tzimisces), and some officers and officials appointed by Tzimisces. Although Scylitzes' criticism of Basil Lecapenus may seem odd coming from an admirer of Tzimisces, Basil was after all Tzimisces' subordinate, had backed other emperors whom Scylitzes criticizes, and was on sufficiently parlous terms with Tzimisces to be credibly accused of poisoning him in 976.

(φράζειν οὐκ ἔχω, expressing doubts about the discovery of the inscription in 971), both first-person references that are not typical of the rest of Scylitzes' history and seem likely to be copied from his source; cf. p. 337 and n. 124 below.

24 Scylitzes, pp. 304–10. McGrath, "Battles," compares Scylitzes' and Leo the Deacon's accounts of the battles around Dristra, acknowledging without further discussion that they had a common source.

25 Scylitzes, p. 311, with the possible break after p. 311.80. Grierson, *Catalogue* III.2, pp. 634–35, dates the first of these "anonymous folles" to "the opening months of 970," since Tzimisces issued no folles in his own name. Scylitzes himself probably added the remark that the emperors after Tzimisces issued folles of the same sort, because these were issued until 1092, around the time Scylitzes wrote. Tzimisces' other two measures cannot be precisely dated. For the praise of the patriarch Basil, see Scylitzes, p. 287. Leo the Deacon, *History* VIII.1, gives a longer description of the restoration of the Church of the Savior.

The views expressed in Scylitzes' history would have been unwelcome to those in power either before or after Tzimisces' reign, but not in 971. Yet if the author had written more than a few months after 971, he would surely have described and praised Tzimisces' spectacular campaigns in Syria, which began in the spring of that year.

The possibility that Scylitzes used two sources that were sympathetic to John Tzimisces, one for Nicephorus II's assassination and the other for John's campaign against the Rus', appears to be remote.[26] In that case we would need to assume that both Leo the Deacon and Scylitzes, who worked not just independently but almost a hundred years apart, used the same two sources for the two years from December 969 to autumn 971, one after the other. Two years also seems too short a time to permit one history to be written of the years up to 969 and a second to continue the first up to 971. The two years from 969 to 971 are in any case too short a period to be the subject of a separate history, and the texts of Leo and Scylitzes show none of the distinctive characteristics of a poem, oration, or any other literary genre but historiography. Moreover, anyone who wrote a history favorable to Tzimisces in 971 could scarcely have avoided saying something about the recent and notorious circumstances of his accession. Even that Scylitzes used one source for the years from 944 to 963 and another for the years from 963 to 971 is improbable, because from the beginning Scylitzes implicitly criticizes the Phocas family, as no historian writing under Nicephorus II would have been likely to do.

Probably the source used by Scylitzes for the period from 944 to 971 and by Leo the Deacon for the period from 969 to 971 was also used by both Scylitzes and Pseudo-Symeon for the accession of the patriarch Theophylact Lecapenus. Here Scylitzes and Pseudo-Symeon obviously shared a source; Pseudo-Symeon cannot be Scylitzes' source, because he gives less information than Scylitzes does.[27] Since Pseudo-Symeon probably finished his work around 978, he should have been able to use a source completed in 971, even if he preferred to follow Symeon for the years from 944 to 963, probably because Scylitzes' source criticized the Macedonian dynasty.[28] The parallel passages in Scylitzes and Pseudo-Symeon tell how Patriarch Tryphon, when he tried to break his promise to abdicate in favor of the emperor's son Theophylact, was provoked by a charge that he was illiterate into signing a blank page later turned into a letter of abdication. This

[26] For a contrary opinion, see Kaldellis, "Original Source": "[That the account of Nicephorus' murder is sympathetic to Tzimisces] suggests that there may have been other texts [than the account of the campaign of 971] generally favorable to [Tzimisces], but we should not fuse them into one pro-Tzimisces source. Absolving a usurper of direct participation in the murder of his uncle and predecessor would have been done in a different kind of text than the heroic narrative of his subsequent wars against the Rus'." In my view, however, an historical text sympathetic to Tzimisces not only could have done both things but would have needed to do both of them. I am grateful to Professor Kaldellis for sending me the text of his article before its publication; see also below, p. 233 and nn. 31 and 32.

[27] Cf. Scylitzes, pp. 226.26–227.62, with Pseudo-Symeon, pp. 742.17–743.10.

[28] See above, pp. 221–22.

story, though doubtless legendary, would fit well into the damning account of Theophylact's life given by Scylitzes on the occasion of the patriarch's death, in 956.[29] In Scylitzes' source this was probably the story's original place, from which both Scylitzes and Pseudo-Symeon moved it to its chronological position, in 931.

Another reason for assuming that this anecdote originally belonged to Scylitzes' source from 944 to 971 is that both the story and the source were evidently written by someone well educated and well read. The anecdote seems to include an allusion to a lost play by Aristophanes, and in Scylitzes' account of Constantine VII's accession we find allusions to Aristophanes' *Knights*, Homer, and an ancient proverb.[30] Although after this point Scylitzes may have omitted some of the literary references in his source, later he alludes to Josephus, Basil of Caesarea, Plutarch's *Lives*, Polybius, and probably Dionysius of Halicarnassus.[31] At least a few of the classical allusions in Leo the Deacon's account of the campaign of 971 that are not paralleled in Scylitzes must go back to their common source, though Leo was admittedly capable of adding such allusions himself.[32] The author of this common source liked classicizing names, because he called Aleppo "Beroea," Mopsuestia "Mopsou Hestia," Dristra "Dorostolum," and the Arabs of North Africa "Carthaginians."[33] Evidently he sympathized with scholars and the Church, because he praised Constantine VII (whom he otherwise criticized) for patronage of the Church and of scholarship, and condemned Nicephorus II especially for oppressing bishops and church institutions.

The author of this lost history was well informed about events and gossip at court, including the plot that led to Nicephorus' assassination. The writer had considerable information about warfare and diplomacy up to the campaign against the Rus' in 971, which he narrated in so much detail that he may well have been an eyewitness. Yet the absurdly inflated numbers he gave for the armies of the Arabs and Rus' defeated by the Byzantines show that he was not a military man. His chronology was generally accurate, though he seems to have included several slightly incorrect dates at the beginning of his account.[34] Since he probably gave

[29] Scylitzes, pp. 242–44.

[30] See Thurn's apparatus to Scylitzes, pp. 227.39 (the lost play of Aristophanes), 233.10 (*Iliad*), 234.41 (the proverb), and 236.76 (*Knights*).

[31] See Thurn's apparatus to Scylitzes, pp. 267.56 (Josephus) and 275.68 (Basil), and for Plutarch, Polybius, and Dionysius, see Kaldellis, "Original Source." Since Thurn overlooked the allusions identified by Kaldellis in Scylitzes' account of the campaign of 971, and Kaldellis does not discuss possible allusions in the earlier part of Scylitzes, it may well include other allusions that remain unidentified. In any case, since Scylitzes failed to transmit some allusions and quotations from Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and the *Life of Basil*, he may have omitted allusions from this source.

[32] See Kaldellis, "Original Source."

[33] See Scylitzes, pp. 253.26 and 254.51 (Beroea), 265.20 and 21 (Carthaginians), 268.2 and 269.7 (Mopsou Hestia), and 298.11 and 299.34 (Dorostolum).

[34] Scylitzes, p. 235.64–66, dates Romanus I's deposition to December 16 (an error for 20) of the sixth indiction (an error for 3rd), AM 6453 (944/45, correct), in the twenty-sixth year of his reign (an error for 24th). Scylitzes, p. 237.1–2, dates Romanus' death to July (an error

the correct date for the birth of Constantine VIII, in 960, the author seems not to be responsible for Scylitzes' repeated and contradictory miscalculations of the ages of Constantine and Basil II.[35] A writer with good information and decided opinions about events as early as 944 should have been born not long after 925; but he may not have been born much earlier, because as we have seen he recorded unreliable hearsay about the patriarch Tryphon's deposition, in 931. Since the writer began his history with 944, he may have continued either the first edition of Symeon's chronicle or the lost history of Manuel the Protospatharius, both of which ended with 948.

As for the writer's name, it should be among the historians Scylitzes lists as sources in his preface: "Theodore Daphnopates, Nicetas the Paphlagonian, the Byzantines Joseph Genesius and Manuel, the deacon Nicephorus the Phrygian, Leo the Asian, Theodore the Bishop of Side and his nephew and namesake [Theodore] the leader of the church in Sebastea, and besides him Demetrius the Bishop of Cyzicus and the monk John the Lydian."[36] This list looks very much as if Scylitzes arranged it in what he thought was chronological order. Although Nicetas the Paphlagonian evidently wrote before Theodore Daphnopates, Scylitzes is unlikely to have known Nicetas' exact dates, because Scylitzes wrote long after

for June 15) of the sixth indiction (948, correct). Scylitzes, p. 253.32–33, gives the length of Romanus II's reign as thirteen years (an error for 3), four months (correct), and five days (perhaps correct), but this is an obvious copying error (possibly made by Scylitzes).

35 Scylitzes, p. 248.3–4, says that Constantine was born in the year after the third indiction, thus between September 1, 960, and August 31, 961. Symeon (*Theophanes Continuatus* VI, p. 469, Markopoulos, "Témoignage," p. 96) and Pseudo-Symeon, p. 757, say that Basil was less than a year old when his father became emperor, while Pseudo-Symeon, p. 755.20–23, says that Basil was born in the fourteenth year of Constantine VII; if both are right, Basil was born between November 9 (or 19), 958, and January 27, 959. Yaḥyā of Antioch, III, pp. 480 (text) and 481 (trans.) and 488 (text) and 489 (trans.), apparently reckoning the ages inclusively, says that Basil died at the age of sixty-eight, putting his birth in the year beginning Dec. 11, 957, and that Constantine died at the age of sixty-nine, putting his birth in the year beginning Nov. 12, 959. All these data are compatible and plausible, indicating that Basil was born between November 9 (or 19) and December 11, 958, and Constantine between September 1 and November 12, 960. Incompatibly with this, Scylitzes, p. 284.95–1, states that at Tzimisces' accession Basil was six and Constantine was four, putting their births in 962/63 and 964/65 (which is impossible if Constantine was Romanus II's son), whereas Scylitzes, p. 314.52–54, says that at Tzimisces' death (which he misdates to December 975) Basil was twenty and Constantine seventeen, putting their births in 954/55 and 957/58. Scylitzes, pp. 369.15 and 374.41–42, says that Basil was seventy when he died on December 15, 1025, and that Constantine was also seventy when he died on November 11, 1028; this would again put their births in 954/55 and 957/58. I am not persuaded by the arguments of Featherstone, "Olga's Visit," pp. 249–51, that Basil may have been born in 953, 955, or 957.

36 Scylitzes, pp. 3–4: ὁ ... Δαφνοπάτης Θεόδωρος, Νικήτας ὁ Παφλαγών, Ἰωσὴφ Γενέσιος καὶ Μανουὴλ οἱ Βυζάντιοι, Νικηφόρος διάκονος ὁ Φρύξ, ὁ Ἀσιανὸς Λέων, Θεόδωρος ὁ τῆς Σίδης γενόμενος προέδρος καὶ ὁ τούτου ἀνεψιὸς καὶ ὁμώνυμος ὁ τῆς ἐν Σεβαστείᾳ καθηγησάμενος ἐκκλησίας, καὶ ἐπὶ τούτῳ Δημήτριος ὁ τῆς Κυζίκου καὶ ὁ μοναχὸς Ἰωάννης ὁ Λυδὸς. ... Here I have omitted the commas in Thurn's edition after Γενέσιος, προέδρος, and Κυζίκου in order to clarify the sense as I understand it.

Nicetas' death and seems never to have seen Nicetas' history.[37] Probably Scylitzes had to deduce these historians' relative dates from ambiguous references in the same lost source that told him that Joseph was Genesius' Christian name and that Theodore Daphnopates wrote *Theophanes Continuatus* and the *Life of Basil*. The most likely candidate to be the source of Scylitzes' information is the author of the lost history from 944 to 971, who may well have mentioned in a preface his fairly recent predecessors Nicetas, Daphnopates, and Genesius.[38]

Except for the error about Nicetas, Scylitzes puts these historians in a very plausible chronological sequence. Daphnopates does appear to have written the *Life of Basil* before Genesius wrote his history. Genesius wrote before Manuel, and Manuel wrote before "Leo the Asian," who must be Leo the Deacon, born in the ancient province of Asia. Theodore of Sebastea is known to have written a history of Basil II, and if he wrote soon after Basil's death in 1025, as seems likely, Theodore's uncle Theodore of Side would probably have written no earlier than Leo the Deacon, who wrote around 995.[39] Probably Theodore of Sebastea wrote before Demetrius, who is attested as bishop of Cyzicus as early as 1028 and as late as 1039.[40] Since we have no independent information about Nicephorus the Deacon of Phrygia or John the Monk of Lydia, we have no reason to think that Scylitzes listed them out of the chronological order that he seems to have followed for the others. Thus in his list the author of his lost source for the years from 944 to 971 should come after Manuel the Protospatharius, who wrote around 962, and before Leo the Deacon, who wrote around 995. This position in Scylitzes' list belongs to "the deacon Nicephorus the Phrygian," who is therefore the most likely candidate to be Scylitzes' lost source for the period from 944 to 971.

Obviously any biographical sketch of Nicephorus the Deacon is subject to even more than the usual uncertainties. According to Scylitzes, Nicephorus was a native of Phrygia, on the Anatolian plateau. If he was indeed our lost historian, he appears to have been born around 925. He probably left Phrygia for Constantinople in order to receive his excellent secondary education. There he read some rare books (possibly in the imperial library) and was perhaps ordained deacon at the canonical age of twenty-five, around 950. He was so familiar with court affairs that he may well have been an imperial deacon like Leo the Deacon, who apparently used Nicephorus' work and tried to supersede it. Leo's and Scylitzes' account of the campaign of summer 971 is so detailed that Nicephorus quite possibly accompanied the army as John Tzimisces' court chaplain, just as Leo the Deacon later attended Basil II on his campaign of 986.

After this campaign, Nicephorus the Deacon (if it was he) quickly finished writing a history of the years from 944 to 971 that depicted John Tzimisces as by far

[37] See below, p. 333.

[38] If so, however, the author (probably Nicephorus the Deacon) must have continued Manuel's history rather than Symeon's, because his preface mentioned Manuel but not Symeon, whom Scyltizes never mentions. See below, pp. 333–34.

[39] See below, pp. 250–51 and n. 101.

[40] See below, pp. 258–59.

the greatest ruler of his time and denigrated Tzimisces' predecessors. This history was a work of real erudition and notable interest. No doubt the historian hoped to be rewarded with a promotion, perhaps to a bishopric, and perhaps he succeeded. Even if he lived past Tzimisces' death, in 976, his history was so aggressively uncomplimentary to the Macedonian dynasty that he had little to gain from continuing it, and he would have had trouble making the drastic alterations necessary to praise Constantine VII, Romanus II, and Basil II. The historian is likely to have died or retired before his history was used by Leo the Deacon around 995. Although it survived to be paraphrased by Scylitzes in the late eleventh century, it was eventually lost, eclipsed by the histories of Scylitzes and Leo, so that today even its author's name can be only a matter of plausible conjecture.

Leo the Deacon

Leo the Deacon was born around 950 in the small town of Caloë (the ancient Coloë), in western Anatolia.[41] Punning on the adjective *kalós* (beautiful), Leo calls Caloë "a very beautiful village" at the foot of Mount Tmolus, near the source of the Cayster, a river that was itself "a very pleasant sight" as it flowed through its valley to the "famous and celebrated" city of Ephesus.[42] Small though Caloë was, it had its own bishop, a suffragan of the metropolitan of Ephesus. Leo's father, Basil, was probably a prosperous landowner, because he had enough money to send his son to Constantinople for a fine secondary education. Leo mentions being at school in the capital in 966 and 968.[43] At times he revisited his native region, where he mentions seeing a pair of Siamese twins around 974.[44] Yet he seems to have planned early in his career to join the clergy of the imperial palace, because he was as familiar with the Bible and the Fathers as with Homer and the dramatists. At some stage he must also have read a number of authors who were not part of the standard school curriculum, including the historians Herodotus, Diodorus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Arrian, Dio Cassius, Herodian, Procopius, Agathias, and Theophylact, some of whom Leo may have known from Constantine VII's *Historical Excerpts*.[45] Leo is unlikely to have found such a range of rare books anywhere but the imperial library.

Leo may have been ordained deacon when he reached the canonical age of twenty-five, around 975. He seems already to have been a member of the imperial court in August of that year, when a comet appeared that Symeon the Logothete and Bishop Stephen of Nicomedia interpreted for the emperor John Tzimisces.

[41] On Leo, see Talbot and Sullivan, *History*, pp. 1–52, Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 278–87, Karales, *Λέων,* pp. 7–92, Panagiotakes, "Λέων," Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* II, pp. 475–91, and Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 367–71.

[42] Leo the Deacon, *History* I.1.

[43] Leo the Deacon, *History* I.1 (his father's name) and IV.7 and 11 (his education).

[44] Leo the Deacon, *History* X.3 (in "Asia," the former Roman province where Caloë was located).

[45] See the index of "quotations, paraphrases, and allusions" in Leo's history in Talbot and Sullivan, *History*, pp. 262–64.

According to Leo, they told John that the comet meant he would triumph over his enemies and live much longer; but they were proved wrong when John died just four months later.[46] Leo was probably acquainted not just with Symeon, who finished both editions of his history by 969, but with the author of the history completed in 971, whether or not he was Nicephorus the Deacon. Leo may also have known the man who wrote the chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon around 978. In 986, as an imperial deacon in his mid-thirties, Leo accompanied the young Basil II on his campaign against the Bulgarians and escaped with difficulty when the Bulgarians ambushed Basil's army.[47] On that expedition Leo may have seen the "piles of bones" that he says remained "even today" near Anchialus from the Bulgarians' defeat of the Byzantines in 919.[48]

Leo's extensive reading in the ancient and early Byzantine historians, which was unusual even for a scholar and quite extraordinary for a clergyman, may indicate that he had planned for some time to write a history. Yet his *History* mentions an earthquake, evidently that of October 989, which caused damage to St. Sophia that took six years to repair, meaning that the repairs were finished in 995.[49] This is the latest event to which Leo's *History* refers, and 995 seems also to have been the approximate date of an oration that Leo delivered at court in praise of Basil II.[50] The titles of both the oration and the *History* show that Leo was still a deacon when he composed them. Perhaps in his youth Leo simply liked to read histories, but on reaching his forties he realized that he was unlikely to be promoted unless he distinguished himself in some way, and thought that he might win imperial favor by his writing. In any case, Basil II's accomplishments had been unimpressive until 989, when with Russian help and a good deal of luck he barely won a bitter civil war. An orator would have needed to wait almost until 995 for Basil to have achieved enough to be eulogized without extravagant flattery.

Leo writes in the preface to his *History* that he will describe what he and his sources had witnessed, apparently up to the time he wrote, and he remarks near the end of his ten books that in due course he will describe the events of the first part of Basil's reign.[51] Therefore, even though his ten extant books run from 959 to 976, Leo seems to have meant from the start to continue his history up to 995 or later. Perhaps he planned, after covering seventeen years in Books I–X, to devote another ten books to the next nineteen years or so. At some point, however, Leo decided that he might benefit from having his first ten books distributed as soon as they were complete. Perhaps he then composed his oration as a preview

[46] Leo the Deacon, *History* X.6. Since in August 975 John was campaigning in Syria, while Symeon and Stephen were evidently in Constantinople, presumably the emperor wrote back to the capital to solicit their opinion. Leo probably heard of their prophecy at court at the time, because it seems unlikely to have circulated much after being refuted by John's death.

[47] Leo the Deacon, *History* X.8.

[48] Leo the Deacon, *History* VII.7.

[49] Cf. Leo the Deacon, *History* X.10, with Mango, "Collapse," pp. 167–68.

[50] Leo the Deacon, *Encomium*; on this work, see Kazhdan, *History* II, pp. 279–81.

[51] Leo the Deacon, *History* I.1 and X.10.

of what he would say in praise of Basil II in the next installment of the *History*. Yet Leo seems never to have written that installment, or at any rate not to have finished it before his death. His desire to advance his career by means of his literary work seems evident. Did he succeed?

George Cedrenus, in copying the preface of Scylitzes' *Synopsis*, changes Scylitzes' reference to "Leo the Asian" to "Leo the Bishop of Caria."[52] We in fact have three short letters ascribed to a metropolitan of Caria named Leo that show not only signs of a good education but significant parallels with Leo the Deacon's *History* and oration.[53] What may seem to tell against identifying the two Leos is that we know the metropolitan of Caria was named John in both 997 and 1030, though admittedly two different men with such a common name could have held the same bishopric.[54] On the other hand, if Leo the Deacon was appointed metropolitan of Caria in 995 or 996 and died in 996 or 997, he would have had time to write a few letters as bishop but not to make much progress on continuing his history. The see of Caria, the medieval name for the ancient city of Aphrodisias, had the prestige of being an archbishopric. While small, it was bigger than Leo's beloved birthplace, Caloë, which was only some fifty miles away, though in a different ecclesiastical province. The see of Caria would have been an appropriate reward for an imperial deacon who had written an elegant history and encomium. Thus the identification of Leo the Deacon with Leo the Metropolitan of Caria seems likely, if not certain.

In his preface Leo says that he chose to begin his history with 959 because the reign of Constantine VII "has been satisfactorily narrated by others," and that after that date he will record what he has seen himself or learned from other eyewitnesses.[55] Since Leo was only about ten years old in 959, he cannot have had much to contribute to the earlier part of his narrative from his own experience; but even around 995 he could have interviewed witnesses much older than himself, or read accounts that they had written. Presumably the historians of the previous period whose works satisfied Leo were Symeon the Logothete, Pseudo-Symeon, and the writer who may have been Nicephorus the Deacon. Although Symeon and Pseudo-Symeon had also included the brief reign of Romanus II, Leo may have thought that the little they said about it was too brief to be satisfactory.

[52] Cf. Scylitzes, pp. 3–4, with Cedrenus I, p. 4. Note that the other three historians in both lists who are described as being "of" a city were all those cities' bishops (Theodore of Side, Theodore of Sebastea, and Demetrius of Cyzicus), whereas those who were natives of a place are described with adjectives ("the Paphlagonian," "the Byzantines," "the Asian," and "the Lydian"). Note also that, though Leo's birthplace, Caloë, was in the province of Asia, Caria (Aphrodisias) was in the separate province of Caria.

[53] See Panagiotakes, "Λέων," pp. 16–41 (publishing Leo's letters on pp. 32–34), and cf. Kazhdan, *History* II, p. 278.

[54] Laurent, *Corpus* V.1, no. 518 (John), referring to Migne, *PG* 119, col. 740D. Kazhdan, *History* II, p. 279, argues, for reasons that are unclear to me, "There is no place for Leo if, of course, we may be sure that the John of 997 and 1030 was one and the same ecclesiastic." Why is the interval between 995 and 997 not such a "place"?

[55] Leo the Deacon, *History* I.1.

Nicephorus the Deacon, or whoever wrote the history ending with 971, had also included the reign of Nicephorus II and the beginning of the reign of John I. We, however, know that Leo the Deacon had a much more favorable opinion of Nicephorus Phocas and the Macedonian dynasty than had appeared in that earlier history. For example, Leo says that Romanus II was "filled with every sort of nobility," despite his youthful indiscretions, and that if Nicephorus II had not been murdered for reasons inscrutable to mankind he would have defeated every enemy of the empire and extended its boundaries as far as India(!).[56] Leo even says that after Nicephorus' murder his brother Leo Phocas ought to have rallied the people to avenge the emperor, and that if Leo had done so he would have succeeded.[57] The historian may consequently have considered the history that concluded with 971 inadequate because of its biases against the Macedonian dynasty and Nicephorus Phocas. In any case, Leo was reluctant to use that history for the years before 969, though from 969 to 971 he followed it closely, because he agreed with its favorable depiction of John Tzimisces. Leo seems to have been uncomfortable with unnecessarily harsh judgments of any of the emperors of his time.

Leo's accounts of the reigns of Romanus II and Nicephorus II are mostly independent of Symeon, Pseudo-Symeon, and the source used by Scylitzes and conjectured to be Nicephorus the Deacon. Since Leo, Scylitzes, and the two closely related accounts of Symeon and Pseudo-Symeon record many of the same events for this period, we cannot exclude the possibility that Leo consulted Symeon, Pseudo-Symeon, or the historian conjectured to be Nicephorus, or that Scylitzes consulted Leo as well as the historian conjectured to be Nicephorus; but these three histories are different enough to demonstrate that their principal sources were different, and most of their parallel accounts simply show independent knowledge of the same events. The one likely exception is that both Leo and Scylitzes confuse Nicephorus II's two Syrian campaigns, in 966 and 968.[58] Since the two historians appear unlikely to have made the same error independently, the likely explanation is that the supposed Nicephorus the Deacon made the mistake and misled Scylitzes and Leo.

Otherwise Leo is generally well informed about this period, especially about Nicephorus Phocas' campaigns. Leo cannot, however, have accompanied those campaigns himself, because he tells us that he was still a student in Constantinople in 968. Yet Leo seems unlikely to have copied some lost history that covered the years from 959 to 969, favored Nicephorus Phocas, and ended with Nicephorus' murder.[59] After all, no one would have ventured to publish a history so favorable to Nicephorus II under John Tzimisces. If an historian who favored Nicephorus had lived past John's death in 976, we would expect him to have continued his

[56] Leo the Deacon, *History* I.2 and V.3.

[57] Leo the Deacon, *History* VI.2.

[58] See Talbot and Sullivan, *History*, p. 119 n. 83.

[59] Such a written source has been postulated and labeled Source B (or the "Phocas History") by Kazhdan, "Из истории 2," pp. 115–28, Tinnefeld, *Kategorien*, pp. 108–18, and Flusin, "Re-writing History," pp. xx–xxi.

work at least until then, when he could safely have denounced Nicephorus' murder; and if such an historian had included the period from 971 to 976, Leo would have known much more about those years than the little he does. Moreover, if Leo depended on literary sources for almost all of his history, his implication in his preface that he used oral sources would have been deceptive—and pointless, because writing history from literary sources was a time-honored practice that nobody needed to conceal.

A more likely explanation is that Leo had an oral source who had served under Nicephorus Phocas on some or all of his campaigns, probably as an officer of high rank. This man was apparently dismissed along with many of Nicephorus' other supporters at the beginning of John I's reign, of which he consequently had no privileged knowledge.[60] He was probably rehabilitated after John's death, in 976, when he met the much younger Leo the Deacon at the court of Basil II. When Leo decided to write his history, he asked this acquaintance about his memories of Nicephorus Phocas and took notes, thus acquiring material for a sympathetic account of Nicephorus' career as early as 959. Since the memory of Leo's source was good but not perfect, Leo sometimes consulted the history conjecturally attributed to Nicephorus the Deacon, at least for Nicephorus II's Syrian campaigns of 966 and 968. Because as a partisan of Nicephorus II Leo's oral source had no personal knowledge of Tzimisces' plot to seize power and held no office during Tzimisces' reign, he had nothing useful to tell Leo about that period. Leo therefore relied on his written source until 971, and for the rest of John's reign was poorly informed.

We may reasonably suspect that, apart from this one source, Leo's connections at court were either underlings like himself, or important officeholders whom Leo did not know well enough to interview. In any case, Leo showed a remarkable inability to produce an adequate narrative of the years from 971 to 976, which included Tzimisces' important campaigns in Syria and had occurred no more than twenty years before Leo wrote. Although his information on events in Constantinople must have been much better than his information on the Syrian campaigns, Leo would have had serious trouble compiling a satisfactory original account of the years from 976 to 995, which included complicated civil wars and Bulgarian campaigns, all fought away from the capital. Probably Leo was aware of this problem and made his bid for literary fame by writing his history mostly from written sources, hoping to be rewarded before he had to write a continuation that he could not do well from the sources available to him.

Leo's *History* is divided into ten books, the most of any Byzantine history known to us since the sixth century.[61] Leo's books are unusually short, on average

[60] For dismissals of Nicephorus' supporters at the beginning of John's reign, see Scylitzes, p. 284, and Leo the Deacon, *History* VI.2.

[61] The most recent histories with this many books that we know (and our knowledge is of course incomplete) are the lost histories by Theophanes of Byzantium (separate works of fifteen and ten books?) and Menander Protector (ten books?), in the later sixth century, although in the early seventh century John of Antioch seems to have copied three parts of

about half as long as the four books of Genesius, about a third as long as the four books of *Theophanes Continuatus*, and about a quarter as long as the five books of Agathias, whom Leo often imitates. The probably intentional effect of having so many short books is to make Leo's brief history seem longer than it is. In fact, Leo covers seventeen years in about three-fifths the space that Agathias had taken to cover seven. Leo's preface resembles Agathias' in praising historiography, affirming the need to record disasters that had happened in his time, extolling the virtues of veracity, describing his small home town, and recording his father's name.[62] Leo also mentions the recent belief of "many men" that the world might soon come to an end, though he seems not to have taken this possibility very seriously, since he bothered to write his history.[63] Invoking Herodotus, Leo says that he will now relate what he has seen himself or heard from others, beginning with the death of Constantine VII.[64]

The remainder of Leo's Book I describes the accession of Romanus II, in 959, Constantine VII's failed campaign against Crete ten years earlier, and the beginning of Nicephorus Phocas' Cretan expedition, in 960. Book II recounts how Nicephorus' brother Leo Phocas defeated Hungarian raiders in Thrace and the Arabs in Cilicia while Nicephorus himself completed his conquest of Crete, raided Arab Cilicia, and returned to Constantinople in 963 after learning of the untimely death of Romanus II. Book III tells how, after setting out for the East, Nicephorus thwarted a plot against him by the eunuch Joseph Bringas, had his army proclaim him emperor, and marched back to the capital to seize power and marry Romanus' widow, Theophano. The next year the new emperor invaded Cilicia and stormed Mopsuestia before returning to Constantinople in triumph.

Book IV describes how, in 965, Nicephorus starved out Tarsus, refused the Bulgarians their customary tribute, and sent an envoy to induce the Rus' to attack Bulgaria. The emperor had, however, grown increasingly unpopular in Constantinople from the time when his military games had caused a panic in the

five books each from the lost sixth-century history of Eustathius of Epiphania. On these histories, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 290–99 and 311–29.

62 Cf. Leo the Deacon, *History* I.1, with Agathias' preface.

63 For a case, in my opinion overdrawn, that many Byzantines did think the world would end around the year 1000, see Magdalino, "Year," p. 242, who says of Leo the Deacon, *History* I.1, "Although Leo makes no connection with the date, c. A.D. 1000, at which he was writing, this is clearly a case of computus dating [dating based on a numerical calculation], reinforced by blind dating [dating not based on such a calculation] in response to events such as the civil wars of the late 970s and the 980s, and the earthquake of 989." By "computus dating" Magdalino appears to mean a calculation that the world would end in A.M. 6500 = A.D. 991/92; but since Leo wrote no earlier than 995 (Magdalino says around 1000), 991/92 had already passed, and anyone who had believed that the world would end then had been proved wrong. Note that, contrary to Magdalino's implication, ὡς πολλοῖς δοκεῖν ("[these disasters occurred] so as to make it seem to many men [that the world was ending]") may mean only that the men believed this at the time of the disasters (the last of which had happened in 989), and no longer believed it at the time of writing.

64 Leo seems to be citing Herodotus I.8 from memory, because he repeats the meaning ("if eyes are more trustworthy than ears, as Herodotus says") but not the exact words.

Hippodrome.[65] The Arabs overwhelmed an expedition he sent to Sicily, an earthquake struck Claudiopolis, and torrential rains damaged Constantinople in 967. Nicephorus returned to Syria again, where he captured Edessa and put Antioch under siege. Book V opens with Nicephorus' recovery of the officers captured on his Sicilian expedition and the treason of his envoy to the Rus', who persuaded the barbarians to break their alliance with the empire and conquer Bulgaria. Leo asserts that nothing could have stopped Nicephorus from defeating the Rus' and mentions that his men had just taken Antioch. The emperor was nonetheless felled by a plot laid by the empress Theophano and John Tzimisces, which Leo calls "an unholy atrocity hateful to God."[66]

Book VI begins with John's proclamation as emperor and his measures to secure his power, including the agreement he made with the patriarch Polyeuctus that allowed him to be crowned. After a fruitless attempt to make peace with the insolent Svyatoslav, who by now had conquered Bulgaria, John prepared to fight him. In a battle in 970, an army led by John's brother-in-law Bardas Sclerus defeated an army of the Rus' and their allies. Book VII describes the revolt in Cappadocia of Nicephorus' nephew Bardas Phocas, which Bardas Sclerus defeated by winning over most of Phocas' troops and persuading Phocas himself to surrender and be exiled. The book concludes with John's preparations to fight the Rus' and his marriage to Theodora, sister of Romanus II. Book VIII begins with John's setting out against the Rus' in 971. He defeated part of their force near Preslav, took the city by assault, and advanced to Svyatoslav's headquarters at Dristra, where he defeated the main enemy army.

Book IX is almost entirely devoted to John's siege of the Rus' in Dristra. The Byzantines encamped and, reinforced by a fleet that advanced up the Danube, fought five more battles around the stronghold. Meanwhile Nicephorus' brother Leo Phocas escaped from exile to Constantinople but was betrayed and blinded. The Byzantines investing Dristra repeatedly prevailed, though sometimes with difficulty, until they were led to final victory by an apparition of St. Theodore Stratelates. Svyatoslav made peace in return for provisions for his starving army, and withdrew. The book closes with John's triumphal return to Constantinople. Book X begins with a brief and confused description of a victorious campaign by John in Syria and farther east, followed by the replacement of the patriarch Basil by Anthony of Studius, in 973. Next comes another short account of a victorious campaign by John in Syria, which reached Damascus and Beirut. Then the appearance of the comet of August 975 begins Leo's lengthy digression on the disasters it portended, including the revolts of Bardas Sclerus and Bardas Phocas, between 976 and 989, Basil II's failed campaign against the Bulgarians, in 986, and the earthquake that struck Constantinople in 989. The book and the *History* conclude

65 Cf. Leo the Deacon, *History* IV.6, with Scylitzes, pp. 275–76. Whether these two accounts are independent is uncertain, since they include no verbal parallels and anyone living in Constantinople at the time would presumably have remembered the event.

66 Leo the Deacon, *History* V.9.

with John's illness and death just as he returned to the capital at the beginning of 976. Leo flatly asserts that John was poisoned, evidently by Basil Lecapenus.

Considered as a literary exercise, Leo's *History* is a skillful imitation of the histories of Procopius and especially of Agathias. Leo's Atticizing Greek is clear and competent, and his archaizing features, like the dual number, are unobtrusive.[67] His adaptations of Procopius and Agathias begin with the preface and continue throughout the work, though Leo seems not to have known the last four books of Procopius' *Wars*, which were usually bound in a separate volume from the first four.[68] On the whole, Leo's allusions are felicitous and appropriate, serving to enhance his literary style rather than to impress readers with his literary knowledge. Although only those who knew the histories of Agathias and Procopius well would have realized what Leo had done, Leo must have thought some of his readers would recognize such references. For example, when Leo repeats and rejects the theory of "the Greeks" that earthquakes result from subterranean gases, he presumably expected some readers to recall that Agathias had described and dismissed the same theory.[69] Again, Leo's story of the Arab harlot who mocked the Byzantines by pulling up her skirt on the walls of Chandax, on Crete, probably shows not an authentic Arab folkway but a reference to Procopius' story of the courtesans who mocked the Persians in the same way from the walls of Amida.[70] Leo's allusions to Procopius and Agathias resemble Procopius' own allusions to Herodotus and Thucydides.[71]

Though Leo often refers to Scripture and the Fathers of the Church, as Procopius and Agathias do not, the majority of his references are to ancient Greek poets, dramatists, and historians.[72] When Leo says of the ill-fated Byzantine expedition to Sicily that "out of such a great army, just a few scattered fugitives returned to the emperor Nicephorus," Leo surely means to recall the end of Thucydides' account of the Athenians' own ill-fated Sicilian expedition: "out of many, few returned home."[73] Leo's reference to the influence on the "Scythian" Rus' of "their philosophers Anacharsis and Zamolxis," which he obviously took from Herodotus' remarks on the ancient Scythians, must be meant as a joke, since everyone knew that calling the Rus' "Scythians" was merely a classicizing affectation.[74] Yet Leo's

[67] For the dual, see Leo the Deacon, *History* IV.8 (δυεῖν), VIII.8 (δυοῖν), and X.6 (ἤστην).

[68] Leo refers only to Books I–IV of the *Wars*. See Talbot and Sullivan, *History*, pp. 17 and n. 56 (where the note should read "*Vandalic Wars* 2.6.23" = *Wars* IV.6.23) and 264 (the index) and n. 70 below. On the two volumes of Procopius' *Wars*, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 372–73.

[69] Cf. Leo the Deacon, *History* IV.9, with Agathias II.15.

[70] Cf. Leo the Deacon, *History* II.6, with Procopius, *Wars* I.7.18–19, a parallel not mentioned by Talbot and Sullivan, *History*, p. 77 n. 37.

[71] On Procopius' allusions, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 189 and 217–18.

[72] Again, see the index in Talbot and Sullivan, *History*, pp. 262–64.

[73] Cf. Leo the Deacon, *History* IV.8, with Thucydides VII.87.6, an allusion (more of substance than of language, since the only word repeated in both passages is ὀλίγοι) not noted by Talbot and Sullivan, *History*, p. 117.

[74] Cf. Leo the Deacon, *History* IX.6, with Herodotus IV.76–77 and 94–96 (using the form "Salmoxis"; Leo probably took the form "Zamolxis" from Agathias, preface 3).

confusion seems genuine when he writes that Tzimisces wanted to advance "as far as Ecbatana" but failed because he could not cross the waterless "desert called Caramanitis." Leo appears to have thought that the Caramanian desert, which Alexander the Great had crossed with difficulty on his return from India, was in northern Mesopotamia.[75] Later Leo confuses Ecbatana (modern Hamadan, in Iran) with Baghdad (which did not exist in antiquity) by reporting that Bardas Phocas fled to "Ecbatana, to the Hagarenes," in 979.[76] This conflation of Iran with Iraq helps to explain how Leo could think that Nicephorus II might have extended his conquests as far as India if he had lived.[77]

As a classicizing historian, Leo likes to invent speeches and letters, and includes many of them, some quite long. He is also fond of edifying anecdotes, like the story of how Nicephorus II ordered an officer to cut off the nose of a soldier who abandoned his shield, then, finding the command had been ignored, cut off the officer's nose. A few anecdotes have a Christian moral, like the story of the Jew in Beirut who pierced an icon of the crucified Christ and was terrified to see it shed blood and water.[78] Like many ancient historians, Leo provides character sketches of the main figures in his *History*, and he finds admirable qualities not just in Nicephorus II and John I but in Romanus II and Svyatoslav.[79] Leo also includes some classicizing digressions, including historical background for the blinding of Leo Phocas in 919 and for relations between Byzantium and Bulgaria as early as the seventh century.[80] While Leo favors classicisms like "Byzantium" for Constantinople and "Tauroscythians" for the Rus', he includes even barbarous-sounding names if clarity requires them. He vacillates, however, between calling Mohammed "Moameth" and "Moamed" and calling Svyatoslav "Sphendoslav" and "Sphendosthlav."[81]

Without being a military man himself, Leo shows a rather good understanding of the Byzantine army, perhaps acquired from the officer who seems to have been his main source for the campaigns of Nicephorus Phocas.[82] In marked contrast to the source that Scylitzes copied for this period, probably Nicephorus the Deacon, Leo appears never to give seriously inflated numbers for the sizes of Byzantine armies, or even for the armies of their enemies.[83] In fact, Leo seems to have

[75] Cf. Arrian, *Anabasis* VI.27–28. Leo the Deacon, *History* V.3, seems to show knowledge of Arrian's *Anabasis*. (See Talbot and Sullivan, *History*, p. 132 n. 37.)

[76] Cf. Leo the Deacon, *History* X.2 with X.7.

[77] Leo the Deacon, *History* V.3.

[78] Leo the Deacon, *History* IV.2 and X.5.

[79] Leo the Deacon, *History* I.2 (Romanus II), III.8 (Nicephorus II), VI.3 (John I), and IX.11 (Svyatoslav).

[80] Leo the Deacon, *History* VII.7 and VI.8–9.

[81] Leo the Deacon, *History* II.6 (Moameth), V.1 (Moamed), V.2 (Sphendoslav), and VIII.5 (Sphendosthlav).

[82] See Talbot and Sullivan, *History*, pp. 36–47.

[83] The single ostensible exception is Leo the Deacon, *History* IV.1, where our text says twice that Nicephorus invaded Cilicia with four hundred thousand men (τετταρακόντα μυριάδας and μυριάδας τὰς τετταρακόντα), an incredibly high figure (about twice the size of the whole Byzantine army at this date) and much the highest number for an army anywhere

replaced exaggerated numbers for the armies of the Rus′ and their allies when he used the same source as Scylitzes for the war of 970–71. According to Scylitzes, the Rus′ and their allies had 308,000 men in 970 and 330,000 in 971; but these absurd figures are incompatible with more credible numbers that Scylitzes himself records for the campaign of 971: a Byzantine vanguard of about five thousand infantry and four thousand cavalry that nearly annihilated eighty-five hundred Rus′ before Preslav, eight thousand Rus′ defenders of Preslav almost all killed by the Byzantines, and three hundred Byzantines who defeated seven thousand Rus′ before Dristra.[84] By contrast, none of Leo's carefully recorded figures is impossibly large in itself, including his largest: sixty thousand men for the army of the Rus′.

Yet Leo's statistics raise at least two problems. First, the disparities in casualties between the Byzantines and the Rus′ are improbably great even in Leo's report, which in this respect resembles the account of Scylitzes and presumably goes back to their common source. We can hardly believe that in the battle of 970 the Byzantines lost only fifty-five men but killed more than twenty thousand of the enemy, or that in two of the battles before Dristra in 971 the Byzantines lost just 150 and 350 men while killing some 7,000 and 15,500 Rus′.[85] Though the figures for Byzantine casualties are presumably based on an official count, those for the enemy must be Byzantine guesses, exaggerated to enhance Tzimisces' reputation. Nor can we believe that the Rus′ still had sixty thousand men before the siege of Dristra, when their original force of sixty thousand from 969 had already suffered heavy casualties.[86] Probably the only independent information Leo had was that at the end of the war twenty-two thousand Rus′ survived from an original army of about sixty thousand, numbers the Rus′ probably supplied themselves in order to collect the grain rations promised under the peace treaty.[87] Leo carelessly concluded that the Rus′ had also had sixty thousand men before the siege, so that all their thirty-eight thousand casualties had died in the six battles around Dristra.

in Leo's *History*. (The next highest number is the 60,000 men of the Rus′.) Since no author with Leo's apparent understanding of the Byzantine army could have believed the figure of four hundred thousand, I would emend to forty thousand (τέτταρας μυριάδας and μυριάδας τὰς τέτταρας), assuming that a copyist made an error in the first instance and the second figure was altered to agree with the first; cf. Leo the Deacon, *History* I.7 (μυριάδων τεττάρων, the army of the Arabs of Crete). Although Talbot and Sullivan, *History*, p. 104 n. 4, prefer to consider Leo's figure an "exaggeration," Leo had no reason to exaggerate it, because his account favors Nicephorus, and the emperor's achievement would have been greatly diminished if his army had been so overwhelmingly large.

[84] Scylitzes, pp. 288 (308,000 Rus′), 295 (5,000 Byzantine infantry, 4,000 Byzantine cavalry), 296 (8,500 Rus′), 297 (8,000 Rus′), 299 (300 Byzantines, 7,000 Rus′, and 330,000 Rus′).

[85] Leo the Deacon, *History* VI.12–13, VIII.7, and IX.10.

[86] See Leo the Deacon, *History* V.2 (in 969 the Rus′ invaded Bulgaria with 60,000 men and defeated 30,000 Bulgarians), VI.12–13 (in 970 10,000 Byzantines defeated more than 30,000 Rus′ and their allies), VIII.4 (in 971 Tzimisces' 15,000 infantry and 13,000 cavalry plus his vanguard [9,000, according to Scylitzes] killed 8,500 Rus′ before Preslav [the same number as in Scylitzes]), VIII.9 (the Rus′ still had around 60,000 men at Dristra), and IX.11 (of the original force of 60,000 Rus′, 22,000 survived the war, so that 38,000 had died).

[87] Leo the Deacon, *History* IX.11.

In fact, most of them probably died in earlier battles and from starvation and disease.

An anecdote in Leo's *History* about an obscure secretary named Nicetas suggests that Leo knew secretaries in the imperial chancery.[88] One of them may have furnished Leo with his confused statistic that Tzimisces collected Arab tribute of "three hundred myriads of silver and gold," a number that could mean any combination of coins or pounds of both metals and shows that Leo was unfamiliar with large sums of money.[89] He also shows little skill in using whatever chronological information he had. He dates just four events by the year of the world and the indiction, recording the indictions correctly but putting the death of Constantine VII and the coronation of Nicephorus II one year of the world too early and the death of John I one year of the world too late.[90] Leo evidently misdates Nicephorus II's Sicilian expedition, conflates Nicephorus' Syrian campaigns of 966 and 968, and confuses John I's Syrian campaigns of 972 and 974.[91] According to Leo, John's final battle with the Rus' in 971 occurred on Friday, July 24; but July 24 fell on a Monday in 971.[92] While some of these mistakes presumably went back to Leo's source or sources, he could easily have corrected them if he had cared about chronology.

For all its success as a literary exercise, Leo's *History* is not particularly distinguished either as historiography or as literature. For a history of a short period written by a contemporary, it shows only a middling concern with accuracy and detail. Still more disappointing, for a history of some of the most magnificent victories that Byzantium ever won, Leo's *History* seldom manages to be dramatic or inspiring. Instead it begins by stating Leo's intention to record the disasters of his time, and ends with an account of various disasters after the history's concluding date, capped by the sordid poisoning of John Tzimisces. Leo's classicizing manner cannot be the real problem, because Procopius had demonstrated long before how vivid a narrative could be composed in the most elegant classicizing style. Perhaps Leo deliberately toned down the exploits of Nicephorus II and John I in order that in the part of the *History* that was never written Basil II's accomplishments would not suffer by comparison. Even in that case, however, Leo's main purpose would have been to advance his career by means of a refined literary composition, not to write the best history he could. In this he resembled his model Agathias, and not Procopius.

88 Leo the Deacon, *History* X.1.

89 Leo the Deacon, *History* X.2. Either a secretary in the chancery or the conjectural history of Nicephorus the Deacon could be the source of Leo's figure of fifteen gold centenaria (1,500 pounds of gold) sent by Nicephorus II to the Rus' (Leo the Deacon, *History* IV.9).

90 See Leo the Deacon, *History* I.2 (Constantine's death), III.8 (Nicephorus' coronation), VI.1 (John's accession, dated to the correct year of the world), and X.11 (John's death); cf. Talbot and Sullivan, *History*, pp. 58 n. 20, 98 n. 68, 143 n.3, and 220 n. 117.

91 See Talbot and Sullivan, *History*, pp. 115 n. 63, 119 n. 83, and 202 n. 1.

92 Leo the Deacon, *History* IX.8; cf. Talbot and Sullivan, *History*, p. 196 n. 43. The actual date may have been Friday, July 21, if in Leo's source (Nicephorus the Deacon?) κα′ was miscopied as κδ′.

Theodore of Side and Theodore of Sebastea

Strangely, no contemporary Byzantine history of the long and brilliant reign of Basil II has reached us, unless we count as Byzantine a history in Arabic by the Egyptian immigrant Yaḥyā of Antioch.[93] Our best narrative in Greek of Basil's reign appears in the *Synopsis of Histories* of John Scylitzes, who wrote some sixty years after Basil's death. We also have a brief account of Basil's reign in the *Chronography* of Michael Psellus, who was a child of seven when the great emperor died, in 1025. While Psellus at least knew some older men who had known Basil, Scylitzes had to rely almost exclusively on written sources that are now lost. Even so, Scylitzes' treatment of Basil's reign receives about half as much space in proportion to its length as the rest of the period Scylitzes covers. Thus the Byzantines—or at any rate Byzantine historians—seem not to have been much interested in the half-century of Basil II's rule, though it was a time of military triumphs that many modern scholars consider the high point of middle Byzantine history.

We have seen that the list of historians in John Scylitzes' preface seems to be in chronological order, and that in this list Leo the Deacon is followed by "Theodore the Bishop of Side and his nephew and namesake [Theodore] the leader of the church in Sebastea."[94] Apart from this, we have three apparent references to the history of Theodore of Sebastea. One is an interpolation in some manuscripts of Scylitzes' history: "The bishop of Sebastea, on whom it is preferable to rely, says that Basil [II] became emperor [in his own right not in December but] on the eleventh of the month of January." January 11, 976, is in fact a possible date for the beginning of Basil's reign.[95] Two more references to Theodore's history appear in an anonymous twelfth-century treatise *On Transfers of Bishops*: "During the reign of Basil [II] the Porphyrogenitus the archbishopric of Corinth was given to the metropolitan of Patras, as Theodore the [bishop] of Sebastea writes, and Leo of Synnada does also. Agapius the Archbishop of Seleucia Pieria was transferred to the patriarchate of Antioch in the reign of the Lord Basil the Porphyrogenitus during the revolt of [Bardas] Sclerus, as Theodore the Bishop of Sebastea says, the author of the book of history of the Lord Basil the Porphyrogenitus." Although the first transfer cannot be dated precisely, the second occurred on June 20, 978.[96]

[93] Yaḥyā, whose important history extends from 938 to 1034, is still a neglected author, and the excellent dissertation of Forsyth, "Byzantine Arab Chronicle," remains sadly unrevised and unpublished.

[94] See above, pp. 234–35, and Scyltizes, pp. 3–4. On Theodore of Sebastea, see Panagiotakes, "Fragments," Flusin, "Re-writing History," p. xxi and n. 39, and Holmes, *Basil II*, pp. 96–99, who finds the evidence for Scylitzes' use of Theodore of Sebastea's history "flimsy."

[95] Scylitzes, p. 313; for the date in December, see Scylitzes, p. 314. While Leo the Deacon, *History* X.11, says that John I died on January 10, Theodore could reasonably have counted the next day as the first one of Basil's reign. On the interpolations in Scylitzes' text, see p. 252 and n. 109 below.

[96] See Darrouzès, "Traité," pp. 181 (text, sections 45 and 46) and 204–5 (commentary). I leave out of account the second part of section 46 of *On Transfers*, which Darrouzès has shown to be the result of the anonymous compiler's confusing section 46 with section 56. Since we cannot be sure that Leo of Synnada did not live past 1025 (see Kazhdan, *History*

These references appear to show that Theodore of Sebastea wrote a history of the reign of Basil II, which was perhaps entitled *History of the Lord Basil the Porphyrogenitus*. It seems to have begun with 976 and concluded with 1025. We can be fairly sure that Theodore's history began with 976, the date of our first reference to it, because the anonymous treatise calls Theodore's work only a history of Basil II and not of John I or Nicephorus II, and because Scylitzes seems to have had no detailed source for the events between 972 and 976. Similarly, that the treatise says Theodore wrote a history of Basil but fails to mention his brother, Constantine VIII, seems to indicate that Theodore concluded his work no later than 1025. Although we cannot be absolutely sure that Theodore stopped no earlier than 1025, that year was the logical place to conclude a "book of history of the Lord Basil the Porphyrogenitus," and we have no reason to think that Theodore's work was unfinished.

We first hear that Theodore was bishop of Sebastea when he signed the acts of a church council in 997. On the assumption that by that date he had reached the canonical age of thirty for consecration as a bishop, he could have been as young as fifty-eight in 1025. He was evidently dead by 1030, when a certain Basil was bishop of Sebastea.[97] Since Constantine VIII was nominally co-emperor throughout Basil II's reign, his absence from the title of Theodore's history may well mean that Theodore wrote before Constantine's death, in 1028. If Theodore had written later, he would probably have included Constantine's short reign to round off the story of the two brothers. Conversely, if Theodore wrote between 1025 and 1028, he presumably omitted Constantine's name from his history's title in order to avoid giving the wrong impression that he had included some of Constantine's reign as senior emperor.

The suggestion has, however, been made that Theodore of Sebastea's history began as early as the birth of Basil I, in 811, and extended to the campaign of Basil II in Iberia, in 1021–22. The existence of a history covering this period has been deduced from twenty-one historical passages in a collection of the posthumous

II, p. 292), this reference to him gives us no decisive information for dating the first transfer more precisely than within Basil II's reign. On Theodore of Sebastea and the treatise *On Transfers*, see also Grégoire and Orgels, "Chronologie," pp. 160–66. Shepard, "Some Remarks," pp. 81–85, suggests plausibly that *On Transfers* also took its section 48 (on the transfer of Theophylact of Sebastea to Russia) from Theodore of Sebastea, but unlike Shepard (p. 82) I see no reason to think that Theodore's history was "dedicated to Basil II," especially since it seems to have been completed after Basil's death. Even on the dubious assumption that MS L provides the best text of section 46 of *On Transfers*, there πρὸς could as easily mean "concerning" as "dedicated to."

[97] See Honigmann, "Studies," pp. 156–57 (mentioning Theodore of Sebastea, his predecessor Leo, and Basil, bishop of Sebastea in 1030); for the synod, see Grumel et al., *Regestes* I.2, pp. 319–20, no. 805. I cannot see why Panagiotakes, "Fragments," pp. 339–40 (who confuses this synod with Grumel's no. 804), believes that the Theodore who was bishop of Sebastea in 997 "can scarcely be the same person" as the historian of Basil II because "the historian wrote about events dating twenty-five years later or more than 997." Why should we assume that Theodore of Sebastea could not have become a bishop in his early thirties and lived into his sixties?

miracles of St. Eugenius, patron saint of Trebizond and a martyr under Diocletian, written by the fourteenth-century metropolitan of Trebizond John Lazaropulus. The first seven passages in Lazaropulus' collection, from 811 until Nicephorus II's accession, in 963, show verbal parallels with the twelfth-century history of John Zonaras. The rest of the passages, beginning with Basil II's accession, in 976, and ending with 1022, show verbal parallels with both Zonaras and John Scylitzes.[98] While Lazaropulus, Zonaras, and Scylitzes clearly shared a common source or sources for the period from 811 to 1022, should we conclude that their only common source was the history of Theodore of Sebastea?

Scylitzes' combined reference to the two historians, "Theodore the Bishop of Side and his nephew and namesake [Theodore] the leader of the church in Sebastea," appears to imply that Theodore of Sebastea's history was a continuation of a history by his uncle Theodore of Side.[99] If so, Scylitzes could have known that the two Theodores were relatives from reading in the history of Theodore of Sebastea that he was the nephew of Theodore of Side and was continuing his uncle's history, facts that Theodore of Sebastea would have been likely to mention in his preface. Yet why should we assume that Theodore of Side, writing toward the end of the tenth century, concluded his history before 811? He could of course have died before completing his work, but if his history had ended before 811, why did Scylitzes list him among the ten historians who wrote on the period after the ending date of Theophanes' *Chronography*, which was 813?

The most economical and plausible hypothesis would seem to be that Theodore of Side wrote a history of the period from about 811 to 976, which was later continued from 976 to 1025 by his nephew Theodore of Sebastea. Probably the two histories were usually copied one after the other in the same manuscripts. Scylitzes, who had other sources that recorded in more detail almost all of the period covered by the history of Theodore of Side, evidently made little use of it—except for the last four years of the reign of John Tzimisces. For that interval, Scylitzes presumably did use Theodore of Side's history, since his account is independent of Leo the Deacon's and we know of no other history that covered those years. Later Zonaras and Lazaropulus used both the history of Theodore of Side and Theodore of Sebastea's continuation of it. Theodore of Side concluded his history with John I's death, in 976, because that was the end of the last complete reign at the time he wrote. By 1025, when the next reign ended with the death of Basil II, Theodore of Side was probably dead as well, and Theodore of Sebastea undertook to bring his late uncle's history up to date.

Because Theodore of Sebastea's continuation made up a single book, seemingly of no very great length, we may conjecture that Theodore of Side's original history had several books, like those of Genesius, the author of *Theophanes Continuatus*, and Manuel the Protospatharius. Theodore of Side's work probably went back little if at all farther than 811, since neither Zonaras nor Lazaropulus used it for

[98] See Panagiotakes, "Fragments," giving texts of the parallels on pp. 341–57.
[99] Panagiotakes, "Fragments," p. 339.

the earlier parts of their works and Scylitzes lists it among histories of the period after that covered by Theophanes. Most likely Theodore of Side began roughly where Theophanes had left off, as Genesius, the author of *Theophanes Continuatus*, Manuel, and Nicephorus the Deacon had done, and incorporated and continued some or all of the works of those historians in his own history of several books. Like those other histories, the history of Theodore of Side is likely to have been written in formal Greek and to have had a limited circulation.

Where the two Theodores' family originally came from is unclear. Side, in Pamphylia, was not close enough to Sebastea, in Cappadocia, to suggest that the uncle and nephew received sees near to their home town. Probably Side and Sebastea were simply the metropolitan sees that happened to be vacant when the two Theodores were appointed to them. Nonetheless, when we see that a man and his nephew both became metropolitan bishops within a few years of each other, we may reasonably guess that the nephew obtained his appointment with the help of the influence of his uncle. Such episcopal appointments were generally bestowed in Constantinople on men who were known there and lived there. Moreover, the books that Theodore of Side would have needed to compile his history are unlikely to have been easily available anywhere but the capital. For that matter, men who wrote learned histories and aspired to bishoprics are likely to have gone to secondary school in the capital. Yet we have no reliable way of knowing whether the two Theodores were natives of Constantinople or came there from the provinces to seek their fortunes, like Leo the Deacon and many others.

Any chronology of the two Theodores must obviously be conjectural and approximate. Theodore of Sebastea cannot have been born later than 967 if he became a bishop by 997. Evidently he wrote around 1027, during the reign of Constantine VIII, and died before 1030, when we know that his bishopric had passed to another man. We may therefore guess that Theodore of Sebastea was born around 965. His uncle Theodore of Side was presumably older, born perhaps around 945. Theodore of Side died some years after 976, the concluding date of his history, and probably after helping his nephew to become bishop of Sebastea, not much before 997. Theodore of Side was doubtless the Bishop Theodore whose monogram appears in a church in the episcopal palace at Side, which has been tentatively dated to the tenth century.[100] Since Theodore of Side seems to have done the research for his history in Constantinople, not from the few books available at Side, he probably became bishop after finishing his work, and quite possibly as a reward from the emperor for compiling it.

The list in Scylitzes' preface puts Theodore of Side immediately after Leo the Deacon.[101] Scylitzes' implication is either that Theodore of Side wrote after Leo the Deacon finished his history, about 995, or that the two historians composed

[100] Hellenkemper and Hild, *Lykien* I, p. 393 n. 206.

[101] That the list in Scylitzes' preface puts Leo before Theodore is admittedly not conclusive, because Scylitzes may simply have listed the two relatives one after the other in the absence of other evidence. Yet Scylitzes may also have found some indication in the history

their works at more or less the same time. In the latter case, Theodore could have finished his history around 995, may have been made metropolitan of Side as a reward, and could then have used his influence as a metropolitan to have his young nephew made metropolitan of Sebastea by 997. This is perhaps the most probable reconstruction. Around 1027 the nephew apparently wrote a continuation of his uncle's history as an act of homage to his relative, by that time probably deceased, rather than as an attempt to win himself a further promotion when he was over sixty. Theodore of Sebastea died a little later, around 1029.

John Zonaras and John Lazaropulus seem to supply us with seven short fragments of Theodore of Side's history. The fragments Lazaropulus preserves from Theodore's history include three bits of information not found elsewhere. First, Lazaropulus says that Basil I was born in the Thracian town of Chariopolis. This may well be correct, since Chariopolis was a small town not far from Adrianople, and the *Life of Basil*, while recording that Basil's family came from the region of Adrianople, also implies that they lived in the countryside.[102] Second, Lazaropulus says that Inger, the father of Basil I's wife Eudocia Ingerina, was of senatorial rank. This seems likely enough, since Inger certainly came from a distinguished family.[103] Third, according to Lazaropulus, Michael III's sister Pulcheria joined Basil and Eudocia in plotting to murder Michael. While this may seem surprising, Pulcheria may well have resented Michael's relegating her mother to a convent, since Symeon the Logothete records that Pulcheria was Theodora's favorite daughter.[104] Lazaropulus also says that Leo VI ruled for eighteen years. Although this is wrong by any calculation, it would almost be right for Leo's predecessor, Basil I, who ruled alone for eighteen years and eleven months.[105] Perhaps Lazaropulus made the mistake by excerpting Theodore carelessly.

Theodore of Side must have taken the otherwise unattested material in his history from a source now lost to us, probably either Manuel the Protospatharius or Nicephorus the Deacon. After Nicephorus' history presumably ended with 971, Theodore seems to have had little to say about the years from 972 to 976, if we are to judge from Scylitzes' and Zonaras' brief accounts of that period. Yet the parallels between those two accounts, and the absence of parallels between them and Leo the Deacon, suggest that their source was Theodore of Side.[106] While Theodore was surely of an age to be aware of events in 972 and seems to have written his work less than twenty years after 976, he was essentially a compiler of the histories of others and may have been reluctant to write history on his own. Besides, the main events of the years from 972 to 976 were the glorious conquests of John

of Theodore of Sebastea or Theodore of Side that Theodore of Side had written after Leo the Deacon.

[102] Cf. Panagiotakes, "Fragments," pp. 329 and 341, with *Life of Basil* 2–5; on Chariopolis, see Külzer, *Ostthrakien*, pp. 308–9.

[103] Cf. Panagiotakes, "Fragments," pp. 329 and 341, with *PmbZ* I, no. 2683.

[104] Cf. Panagiotakes, "Fragments," pp. 329 and 341, with Symeon I, 131.21.

[105] Panagiotakes, "Fragments," pp. 329 and 342. Leo himself ruled for twenty-five years and eight and a half months.

[106] Cf. Scylitzes, pp. 311–12, and Zonaras XVII.4.8–14, with Leo the Deacon, *History* X.

Tzimisces, and describing them in detail was unlikely to win the favor of Basil II, whose favor Theodore wanted to secure. By contrast, Theodore of Sebastea seems to have written an original history of the years from 976 to 1025, all of which fell within his lifetime, even if he had still been rather young in 976.

We know too little about the other lost sources of Scylitzes to be certain that Theodore of Sebastea was Scylitzes' only source for the reign of Basil II. In fact, if the addition to Scylitzes' text that mentions Theodore of Sebastea is not by Scylitzes himself, we cannot be absolutely sure that Scylitzes used Theodore's history at all. On the other hand, the information about Basil II's reign is so similar and so abbreviated in the histories of both Scylitzes and Zonaras, and in all other Byzantine histories but that of Yaḥyā of Antioch, that it appears to derive from just one narrative source, and Theodore of Sebastea is the only contemporary Greek historian known to have covered that period and to have been cited by others. Scylitzes had the habit of making fairly complete and faithful summaries of the main sources he consulted, and he appears especially likely to have done so in covering the momentous reign of Basil II.[107] Admittedly, Scylitzes and Zonaras leave out the three transfers of bishops mentioned by Theodore of Sebastea; but such minor details of church politics, even if a contemporary bishop thought they warranted a brief mention, would hardly have seemed worth copying by secular historians writing a century later. Yet some manuscripts of Scylitzes' account of Basil II include three references to earlier ecclesiastical history that seem appropriate to a bishop with historical interests like Theodore of Sebastea.[108] The balance of probability is therefore that most of the contents of Theodore's history, though of course not all of its contents or all of its wording, survives in the summaries of Scylitzes and Zonaras.

Theodore's history was probably the source of most of the so-called interpolations in the text of Scylitzes. Scylitzes' whole history has about sixty passages that appear in some manuscripts but not in others. Thirty-three of these additions occur in the section on Basil II's reign as senior emperor, from 976 to 1025.[109] This frequency is particularly noteworthy because Basil's reign accounts for just over a tenth of the text of Scylitzes' whole history and about a fifth of the time span that the history covers. Moreover, the additional passages relating to the reign of Basil II, unlike many of the others, add details to Scylitzes' narrative, as if they came from the same source as the main text, not from a different source with its own approach to the subject. As we have seen, an interpolation at the very beginning of Basil's reign cites "the bishop of Sebastea." Thus the interpolator, even if

[107] See above, p. 226 and n. 2.

[108] Scylitzes, pp. 330 (references to the First Council of Nicaea and the Council of Serdica) and 365 (a reference to Justiniana Prima), only in MSS A, C, E, and U (the last only in E and U).

[109] On the interpolations, see the preface to Thurn's edition of Scylitzes, pp. xxix–xxxiv. Note that here I distinguish the interpolation at Scylitzes, pp. 312.26–313.45 (which relates to John Tzimisces' reign and obviously derives from Leo the Deacon, *History* VI.2–3 and X.11), from that on p. 313.45–47 (which is explicitly attributed to the bishop of Sebastea).

he was not Scylitzes himself, seems as a rule to have taken his additions from the source that Scylitzes had originally used, which appears to have been the history of Theodore of Sebastea.[110] These interpolations, though frequent, are relatively short and trivial, probably because Scylitzes had included most of the information from Theodore's history in the first place. Another possibility is that Scylitzes originally included all these passages but a later copyist found some of them too trivial to copy and deleted them.

Scylitzes' oddly unbalanced summary of the years from 976 to 1025, the section for which Theodore of Sebastea seems to have been his source, falls into three distinct parts. Roughly the first half is dedicated to a narrative of Basil II's civil wars with Bardas Sclerus and Bardas Phocas, from 976 to 989. While generally detailed and accurate, most of this section is plainly told from the point of view of the rebel Sclerus, including information that only Sclerus' closest associates would have been likely to know.[111] Second, a very brief section gives a hurried and confused summary of the ten years from 989 to 999. Third, another section that again comprises almost half of the entire account supplies another detailed and accurate narrative of events from 999 to 1025, concentrating on the Bulgarian war up to Basil's triumph in Constantinople in 1018/19 and the Iberian campaign and second civil war, in 1021–22. In this section events are dated year by year, apparently with accuracy, and much attention is given to the exploits of Basil's aristocratic generals. Many dates in all three of these parts are given by indictions and years of the world, which Scylitzes seldom uses in his long account of the years from 811 to 976.

In each of these three sections, events in Constantinople are recorded only sporadically. We learn that in 976 the news of the revolt of Bardas Sclerus distressed all the sensible and honest men in the capital but pleased those who were corrupt.[112] The great earthquake of 986 in Constantinople is recorded at the right date with a few details of the emperor's subsequent restoration of St. Sophia,

[110] Thurn, in the preface to his edition of Scylitzes, pp. xxvi and xxxiv, suggests that many but not all of these interpolations were made by Michael, bishop of Diabolis, who according to a colophon copied MS U (which begins only with 976) in the year 1118. This conjecture is possible but not certain, especially because it depends on the further conjecture that a later copyist introduced some but not all of Michael's interpolations into MS E through *contaminatio*. Admittedly the interpolations need not all be by one hand, and even those that are by one hand need not have been taken from a single source. Prokič, "Zusätze," especially pp. 23–26 and 40, argues that most of the interpolations derive from Theodore of Sebastea. Ferluga, "John Scylitzes," especially pp. 169–70, argues that Michael of Diabolis drew on "his knowledge of events which had taken place in that area [Diabolis = Devol, near Ochrid] some hundred years earlier, since he could have heard about them through oral traditions still preserved in his time"; but this idea seems implausible, because most of the interpolations add very minor details of the sort that no one would have passed on orally for a hundred years. I am, however, reluctant to attribute to an educated author like Scylitzes or Theodore the interpolation in the margin of MS E at Scylitzes, p. 346.58–59, deriving the name of the Vardar River from Bardas Sclerus.

[111] See Scylitzes, pp. 316.28–317.37, 318.71–76, and 334.40–335.56.

[112] Scylitzes, p. 317.

including its cost of ten centenaria (a thousand pounds of gold).[113] The detail that Basil paraded the defeated rebels on donkeys at his triumph in 989 may come from an eyewitness.[114] The succession of patriarchs of Constantinople is recorded vaguely and inaccurately. We are told that Patriarch Anthony III (974–79) resigned "during the revolt of Sclerus" and that the next patriarch, Nicholas II (979–91), was chosen after a vacancy of "four years and a half," although this vacancy actually occurred after Nicholas' death (991–96). Then we learn of a total eclipse of the sun after Nicholas' accession (April 979), apparently the eclipse of May 28, 979.[115] Later we find that Nicholas died after a patriarchate of "twelve years and eight months," which appears to be right; but we also hear that his successor, Sisinnius II (996–98), took office in A.M. 6503 (994/95), which is a year too late, and had a patriarchate of "three years," which is a year too many, before he was succeeded by Sergius II (1001–19), after a vacancy that is not mentioned.[116] Finally the deaths of Sergius and his successor, Eustathius (1019–25), are dated correctly.[117]

Theodore of Sebastea could himself have been the source of this information on Constantinople. Scylitzes uses the same chronological indicator for the resignation of Patriarch Anthony that *On Transfers of Bishops* attributes to Theodore: "during the revolt of Sclerus."[118] If Theodore was born around 965 and lived or came to live in the capital, he may well have remembered local opinions of Sclerus' revolt in 976, the eclipse of 979, the earthquake of 986, and Basil's triumph in 989. Writing in Sebastea soon after 1025, Theodore may well have tried to reconstruct from memory the dates of the earlier patriarchs of Constantinople, misplacing the vacancy in the patriarchate but remembering its length and the eclipse that followed the accession of Nicholas II. The misdating of the accession of Sisinnius II to 994/95, rather than to April 12, 996, may be significant if Theodore became bishop of Sebastea in late 996 or early 997; he may later have recalled leaving for Sebastea soon after Sisinnius' accession but misremembered how much time had passed before he left. Although Theodore returned to Constantinople for the council of 997 and presumably on some other occasions, the rest of Scylitzes' account of Basil's reign mentions few events in the capital, except when the emperor and his army returned there.

A recent study has tried to explain the partiality for Bardas Sclerus in Scylitzes' account of the civil wars of 976–89 by arguing that Scylitzes drew on a lost encomium of Sclerus.[119] The argument would be much the same if Theodore of Sebastea had used such an encomium and Scylitzes then used Theodore's history. Yet Scylitzes' summary is not always favorable to Sclerus. Scylitzes records that

[113] Scylitzes, pp. 331–32.

[114] Scylitzes, p. 338.

[115] Scylitzes, p. 328. For the dates of these patriarchates and the eclipse, see Grumel, *Chronologie*, pp. 436 (patriarchs) and 464 (eclipse).

[116] Scylitzes, pp. 340–41. For the dates of these patriarchs, see Grumel, *Chronologie*, p. 436.

[117] Scylitzes, pp. 365 and 368. For the dates of these patriarchs, see Grumel, *Chronologie*, p. 436.

[118] Cf. Scylitzes, p. 328, with Darrouzès, "Traité," pp. 181 (section 46).

[119] Holmes, *Basil II*, pp. 240–98.

the rebel relied heavily on the support of Arabs and troublemakers, was tricked by Manuel Eroticus, was defeated by Bardas Phocas in single combat, was tricked a second time by Phocas, and finally, as a blind and pathetic figure, had to be led by the hand to submit to the emperor.[120] Moreover, defeated rebels were seldom if ever the subjects of Byzantine panegyrics, which were generally reserved for emperors and victorious generals. A more plausible explanation is that after 1025 Theodore of Sebastea gathered oral reports on the revolt from one or more former partisans of Sclerus, who told him what they recalled from their point of view, showing some sympathy for their old leader.

The same recent study has proposed that Scylitzes' accounts not only of the civil wars but of Basil II's Bulgarian campaigns gave prominence to Anatolian aristocrats, including relatively unimportant ones, because Scylitzes wanted to encourage the aristocrats of his own time to cooperate with the emperor, probably Alexius I (1081–1118).[121] While no doubt Scylitzes did want to see cooperation between the emperor he served and the contemporary aristocracy—and Scylitzes could scarcely have encouraged rebellions—by the time he wrote he obviously had to depend on written sources for events before 1025. His political interests cannot explain why he found so much information on aristocrats in his source or sources for the period from 999 to 1025 but not for the period from 989 to 999.

If Scylitzes' main or exclusive source was Theodore of Sebastea, the most likely explanation is that Theodore, writing at Sebastea soon after 1025, gathered his material from retired veterans in Cappadocia. One of his sources was probably a former subordinate of Nicephorus Xiphias, whose exploits in Bulgaria from 999 to 1018 and in the civil war of 1021–22 Scylitzes relates favorably in some detail.[122] Other sources may have served under David Arianites or Constantine Diogenes, who like Xiphias are mentioned prominently and favorably in Scylitzes' account of the Bulgarian wars.[123] Like the Sclerus, Xiphias, Arianites, and Diogenes families, practically all the aristocratic families that provided generals for Basil's Bulgarian wars came from the general region of Cappadocia, and most of them would naturally have returned home with their retainers after the wars were over.[124] Scylitzes' treatment of Basil II, though favorable, seldom seems

[120] Scylitzes, pp. 316.22–28, 323.10–31, 326.90–10, 335.71–336.81, and 339.59–63.

[121] Holmes, *Basil II*, pp. 171–239.

[122] For references to Xiphias, see Scylitzes, pp. 343.83–344.88 (favorable), 345.38–40, 348.18–349.31 (favorable), 352.22–32 (favorable), 354.83–87 (favorable), 364.67–68 (favorable), and 366.32– 367.70 (the civil war and its aftermath). Theodore's source seems, however, not to have been Xiphias himself, who was exiled to the island of Antigone between 1022 and 1028 and then became a monk in the Monastery of Studius (Scylitzes, pp. 367.50–54 and 376.74–76).

[123] For Arianites, see Scylitzes, pp. 345.34–38, 350.59–62, 354.81–84 (favorable), 355.19–21 (favorable), and 358.81–89; for Diogenes, see Scylitzes, pp. 352.22–32 (favorable, mentioned with Xiphias), 355.19–21 (favorable, mentioned with Arianites), 356.38–49 (fairly favorable), and 365.16–366.30 (very favorable).

[124] See Cheynet, *Pouvoir*, pp. 213–29, especially 215 (Sclerus), 218 (Diogenes), and 229 (Xiphias and Arianites), with 246 (a map of the homelands of the Anatolian aristocratic families).

based on the views of the emperor or his closest advisers and courtiers.[125] Unlike Yaḥyā of Antioch, Symeon the Logothete, and Pseudo-Symeon, Scylitzes has only an approximate idea of Basil's age, apparently based on contemporary impressions of how old the emperor looked.[126]

Scylitzes' account of the Bulgarian wars implies an approval of Byzantine ruthlessness that presumably reflects the attitude of the imperial officer corps. Basil's famous blinding of some fifteen thousand Bulgarian prisoners of war, which was decisive in breaking Bulgarian power, is related as a simple matter of fact. The story of the blinding of the Bulgarian boyar Ibatzes through the treachery of the Byzantine officer Theodore Daphnomeles is described as "something pleasant and wonderful," and Daphnomeles is commended for his courage (which he certainly displayed, having entered his enemy's stronghold with only two retainers). Scylitzes recounts without a hint of disapproval Constantine Diogenes' murder of the Bulgarian boyar Sermon by breaking an oath, and two Byzantine officers' massacre of a company of Rus' by breaking an agreement.[127] Apparently the metropolitan of Sebastea had no interest in moralizing about how the Byzantines waged war.

If Theodore of Sebastea was Scylitzes' source from 976 to 1025, he seems to have been respectably but not remarkably well educated. This part of Scylitzes' history includes five literary allusions, to Demosthenes, Sophocles, Homer, and the Psalms.[128] While the author uses a few classicisms like "Byzantium" for Constantinople, and the less banal "Triballia" for western Serbia and "Upper

[125] In the description of Basil's successful attack on the forces of Bardas Phocas, at Scylitzes, p. 336.91, we should presumably read ἀνωϊστὶ ("unexpectedly") with MS B, not ἀνοήτως ("madly") as in Thurn's text, which would be an unparalleled and seemingly undeserved criticism of the emperor.

[126] See p. 234 n. 35 above, noting that Scylitzes, p. 369.15, says that Basil died at age seventy, though his real age was probably sixty-seven.

[127] Scylitzes, pp. 349 (the blinding of prisoners), 360–63 (the blinding of Ibatzes, ἡδύ τι καὶ θαυμαστὸν), 365–66 (the murder of Sermon), and 367–68 (the massacre of Russians). Scylitzes' figure of "around" (ἀμφὶ) fifteen thousand blinded Bulgarian prisoners is independently corroborated by Cecaumenus, *Strategicon* II.49, who gives the more precise number of fourteen thousand. Unlike most numbers for enemy armies in sources, which seem to be based on vague impressions from the battlefield, this one should be nearly correct, because the Byzantines themselves captured and blinded the prisoners; the details in Scylitzes' account show that it depended on well-informed contemporaries, and certainly not on oral transmission over the seventy years or so that separated the event from Scylitzes' compilation. Nonetheless, recently fashionable skepticism about sources has led to such assertions as Stephenson, *Legend*, p. 4: "It is likely … that Skylitzes was reporting a story which had remained in circulation since the episode, and which had been modified and exaggerated in the retelling." Stephenson's comparison of the fifteen thousand blinded Bulgarians with ancient figures of 2.3 million or 4 million Persians at Thermopylae simply shows the difference between a large but credible number and absurd exaggerations. Holmes, *Basil II*, pp. 154–55, is somewhat more cautious.

[128] According to Thurn's apparatus, the allusions are at Scylitzes, pp. 316.11–13 (Demosthenes), 321.71 (Sophocles), 322.87 (Psalms), 332.61 (*Iliad*), and 368.95 (*Odyssey*, in an interpolation).

Media" for Vaspurakan, he transmits a large number of Bulgarian place and personal names unaltered, and even quotes a phrase in Bulgarian.[129] Scylitzes never uses the archaic dual number in this part of his history, although the part after 1025 has a half-dozen examples of the dual, the first of which occurs almost at once after Basil II's death.[130] While Scylitzes was capable of simplifying or adorning his sources to some extent, these features seem less likely to be his than to derive from the text he summarized.

We may sum up what can reasonably be conjectured about Theodore of Sebastea as follows. He was born around 965, perhaps in Constantinople, where he seems to have received a good secondary education. He and his uncle, for whom he was quite possibly named, pursued careers in the Church, apparently in Constantinople. By 997 he became archbishop of Sebastea, probably through the influence of his uncle, who by then was archbishop of Side. After Basil II died, in 1025, Theodore of Sebastea decided to add a book on Basil's reign to the history of his late uncle, which had concluded with Basil's accession, in 976. The younger Theodore seems to have gathered information from a few high-ranking veterans of Basil's civil and Bulgarian wars, who probably lived around Sebastea. He also drew on his own memories of life in Constantinople and in Sebastea, where he would have received some news about Basil's wars with the Arabs and Iberians, which receive cursory treatment in Scylitzes. Apparently Theodore completed his history around 1027 and died around 1029.

This tentative reconstruction would explain a good deal about Scylitzes' coverage of the reign of Basil II. Scylitzes' account is brief, because it was based on a short work meant to supplement a much longer history of the years from 811 to 976 by Theodore of Side. Theodore of Sebastea gave disproportionate treatment to the civil wars of 976–89 and 1021–22 and to the Bulgarian wars from 999 to 1019 because his main sources were Cappadocian veterans who had served in those wars. Although their information was generally reliable and detailed, and Theodore collected it intelligently and diligently, the rest of his work was rather haphazard. He could of course have written a very long book on Basil II, or divided his treatment into several books, but he seems not to have gathered enough material to do so. Probably he wrote at Sebastea, not in the capital, which would have been the best place to find written and oral sources for Basil's reign. While he may have revisited Constantinople, or received letters or even books or documents from friends or acquaintances there, we have no particular reason to think that he did.

Theodore of Sebastea appears to have composed his book when he was in his sixties, primarily to honor his uncle's memory, not out of personal ambition or any special passion for history. His short book had its defects, but it filled a gap, as his uncle's mainly derivative history had not. No other Byzantine historian (unless we count Yaḥyā of Antioch, who wrote in Arabic) undertook to record

[129] Scylitzes, pp. 340.87 (Byzantium), 353.65 (Triballia), 354.94 (Upper Media), and 356.46 (the phrase in Bulgarian).

[130] See Scylitzes, pp. 371.39–40 (τοῖν βασιλέοιν), 439.95 (χεροῖν), 486.81 (χεροῖν), 491.33 (τοῖν δυοῖν), 497.10 (τὼ ὀφθαλμὼ), and 499.55 (δυοῖν ἀτόποιν).

Basil II's reign until it had become too late to do better than Theodore had done. After Scylitzes summarized most of the contents of Theodore's history in a more convenient form, the original ceased to be much read and was eventually lost. Theodore of Side's history seems also to have sunk into oblivion, eclipsed by the overlapping histories of Symeon the Logothete, Leo the Deacon, and Scylitzes.

Demetrius of Cyzicus and John the Monk of Lydia

John Scylitzes devotes more than twice as much space to the thirty-two years after Basil II's death as to the fifty years of Basil's reign as senior emperor. Scylitzes' sources for the years from 1025 to 1057 seem to be the two historians he cites last in his preface: "Demetrius the Bishop of Cyzicus and the monk John the Lydian." While Scylitzes mentions Demetrius as a participant in historical events in 1028 and 1037, he cites neither Demetrius nor John the Monk as a source for any specific information. Yet a sign of a possible division does appear about halfway through Scylitzes' coverage of this period: from 1028 to 1043, but not earlier or later, every year of the world is carefully noted.[131] The part of Scylitzes' account before 1025 dates events by years of the world only occasionally, and the part from 1043 to 1057 mentions just two more years of the world.[132] Thus Scylitzes' history from 1028 to 1043 appears to depend, if not necessarily directly, on an annalistic source that dated events by years of the world. If, as seems likely, Scylitzes slightly summarized his source's dates during the short reign of Constantine VIII (1025–28), this annalistic source could have begun as early as 1025.[133] Was that source the history of Demetrius of Cyzicus?

Apart from the preface, Scylitzes' history mentions Demetrius of Cyzicus twice. First, it records that in 1028 Romanus III Argyrus (1028–34) appointed Demetrius, who had been Romanus' friend before his accession, as one of three syncelli of the patriarch Alexius of Studius (1025–43).[134] Second, Scylitzes relates that when John the Orphanotrophus, brother of the emperor Michael IV (1034–41), decided he wanted to become patriarch of Constantinople, in 1037, Demetrius of Cyzicus led

[131] Scylitzes, pp. 373.15 (A.M. 6537), 381.17–18 (A.M. 6538), 384.10–11 (A.M. 6539), 384.29 and 386.75–76 (A.M. 6540; at 386.78, τούτῳ τῷ ἔτει should be A.M. 6541, apparently summarized incorrectly by Scylitzes from his source, as appears from τούτῳ τῷ … ἔτει at 389.54), 389.54 (A.M. 6541; for ,ςφμζ′ [,ςφμβ′ in four MSS] read ,ςφμα′), 390.90 (A.M. 6542), 398.75 (A.M. 6543), 399.7 (A.M. 6544), 399.20 (A.M. 6545), 402.81 and 403.31 (A.M. 6546), 404.50 (A.M. 6547), 405.76 and 408.63–64 (A.M. 6548), 412.88 (A.M. 6549), 415.51 and 421.5 (A.M. 6550), 424.59 (A.M. 6551), and 433.38 (A.M. 6552; for ,ςρνβ′ read ,ςφνβ′ with MS M).

[132] Scylitzes, pp. 469.65 (A.M. 6558) and 480.27 (A.M. 6564).

[133] Note that Scylitzes, p. 368.85–86, cites the year of the world when Basil II died (A.M. 6534), and Scylitzes, p. 373.92, dates to "that same year" a raid by the Pechenegs under Constantine VIII. Scylitzes, p. 373.2–14, looks like a very brief summary of the events of A.M. 6535 and 6536. In the latter passage Scylitzes also mentions a drought, one of the phenomena that the annalistic source (Demetrius of Cyzicus?) was particularly careful to record; see below, p. 261 and n. 144.

[134] Scylitzes, p. 375.

a party of metropolitans who plotted to depose the current patriarch, Alexius, on the pretext that he had been appointed by Basil II rather than canonically elected. The patriarch frustrated their plot by offering to resign if all the metropolitans he had consecrated were deposed; since these included most of Demetrius' party, they were "filled with shame and fear."[135] While Demetrius' own history could have been the source of the first reference, the second is so hostile to him that it cannot come from his history in anything like this form. Apparently, by process of elimination, it came from the history of John the Monk.

Other sources supply more of the biography of Demetrius. He was born before 998, because he was already metropolitan of Cyzicus, and therefore at least thirty years old, when he attended a church synod in January 1028, under Constantine VIII. If, like most of his fellow plotters in 1037, Demetrius was consecrated by Patriarch Alexius, he became a bishop after 1025. Demetrius wrote works on canon law, and probably a treatise against the Jacobite Monophysites that is dedicated to Constantine VIII. As we have seen, Demetrius was a friend of Romanus III, who made him a syncellus in November 1028. As a syncellus Demetrius probably spent most of his time in the capital, not in the nearby city of Cyzicus. He was evidently in St. Sophia on Pentecost 1029, when a dispute over precedence arose between the three new syncelli and the other metropolitans.[136] He gained the additional office of steward of St. Sophia after 1029, when he attended a synod that condemned some Jacobites, and before April 1032, when he signed another synodal decree.

By 1037 Demetrius was currying favor with John the Orphanotrophus, even though John had poisoned Romanus III, who had considered Demetrius his friend and awarded him two prestigious offices at the patriarchate. Perhaps Demetrius was trying to allay doubts about his loyalty among members of the new regime. He seems to have lost his office of steward after his conspiracy against the patriarch in 1037, but he was still a syncellus when he attended a synod against heretics in September 1039. That is our last datable reference to him.[137] Even if he lost some of his prominence after John the Orphanotrophus was exiled, in 1041, Demetrius would probably have appeared in our sources again if he had lived very much longer. Yet he may well have lived long enough to compose a history that ended with 1043.

Only Scylitzes mentions that Demetrius was the author of a history. No doubt the ambitious and opportunistic syncellus could have written in detail about events in the capital from 1025 to 1039, and until 1043 if he was still alive at the time. That Scylitzes' source for Demetrius' plot of 1037 was John the Monk need

[135] Scylitzes, p. 401. The date must be mid-1037, because in this passage Alexius, who was appointed in December 1025, describes himself as having been patriarch for eleven and a half years.

[136] Scylitzes, p. 376.77–81. The passage refers to the syncelli, in the plural (τοὺς συγκέλλους), implying that all three were present.

[137] The references are conveniently collected in *PBW*, Demetrios 101, except for Demetrius' writings, on which see Beck, *Kirche*, p. 532.

mean only that John's history had begun by then, not that Demetrius' history had ended by then. Perhaps Demetrius omitted the embarrassing incident of his plot altogether, or perhaps John substituted his own version of the plot in order to replace an account that he found in Demetrius' work but considered distorted. If, as Scylitzes' preface implies, John the Monk's history was the last source Scylitzes used, it apparently ended with the accession of Isaac I in 1057, but its beginning date could still have been earlier than 1037.

The simplest interpretation of all this evidence is that John the Monk wrote a continuation of the history of Theodore of Sebastea from 1025 to 1057, in the process rewriting and citing an earlier history by Demetrius of Cyzicus from 1025 to 1043, which was organized by years of the world. Scylitzes summarized John's history and cited Demetrius' history in his preface because he found it mentioned in John's history, just as he had cited Manuel the Protospatharius' history in his preface because he found it cited by Symeon the Logothete.[138] Scylitzes' summary of John's history included most of the dates and much of the content of Demetrius' work, but only insofar as those had been incorporated into a narrative told from John's point of view. Just as the criticism of Demetrius' plot against Patriarch Alexius must have come from John and not Demetrius, Demetrius is unlikely to have made the criticisms of the empress Zoë found in Scylitzes' history, because Demetrius apparently wrote around 1043, when she was still reigning.[139]

Demetrius' motive for writing a history that ended with 1043, rather than with the death of Michael IV, in 1041, or the fall of Michael V, in 1042, was presumably to seek the favor of the new emperor, Constantine IX Monomachus (1042–55). Thus Demetrius is probably responsible for the parts of Scylitzes' history that condemn the corruption of John the Orphanotrophus and the perfidy of Michael V and praise the reforms that Zoë and Constantine IX ordered in 1042.[140] Scylitzes' narrative assigns most of the responsibility for the murder of Romanus III to the Orphanotrophus rather than to Zoë and Michael IV, even though both the latter receive some blame in Scylitzes' history as we have it.[141] After Constantine IX became emperor, Demetrius would have had little trouble recording the revolts of George Maniaces and Theophilus Eroticus, in 1042, and the plot of Leo Lamprus and the Russian raid on Constantinople, in 1043, because these all turned out well for the emperor.[142] Probably Demetrius omitted any references to his past

[138] See above, p. 198.

[139] For this reason I doubt the conjecture of Laiou, "Imperial Marriages," pp. 171–72, that Demetrius was the source of the disapproving reference to the marriage of Zoë and Michael IV at Scylitzes, pp. 390–91.

[140] See Scylitzes, pp. 389–90, 392–93, 404, 408–9, and 412 (the corruption of the Orphanotrophus), 417–18 (the ingratitude of Michael V), 422 (the reforms of Zoë), and 423–24 (the reforms of Constantine).

[141] Scylitzes, pp. 389–90 and 415.

[142] Demetrius may even have been able to record without offense to Constantine the popular demonstration of March 1044 against the emperor's mistress Maria Scleraena, which subsided when Zoë and Theodora supported the emperor (Scylitzes, p. 434); but the material derived from Demetrius' history seems more likely to have ended with Scylitzes, p. 433.39.

support of John the Orphanotrophus, who had exiled Constantine Monomachus before his accession.[143] To judge from Scylitzes' summaries, Demetrius' history was comparable in length to the history of Theodore of Sebastea and like it could have formed one book. Demetrius' history may thus have continued the history of Theodore of Sebastea as the latter had continued the history of Theodore of Side.

Scylitzes' summary also indicates that Demetrius had access to a series of annals, which took special care to record droughts, rains, meteors, comets, famines, plagues, earthquakes, and other portents and miracles from all over the empire. This section of Scylitzes' history often dates these phenomena to the day, or even to the hour. They can be portents of coming disasters, but sometimes have no obvious point. For example, while Scylitzes' account is uniformly hostile to John the Orphanotrophus, it nonetheless relates that John obtained the miraculous cure of a sore on his mouth when visiting St. Nicholas' tomb in Myra.[144] No doubt the same annals included most of Scylitzes' descriptions of wars and other events in the East, the islands, the Balkans, Italy, and Sicily from 1025 to 1043. Such annals, given their broad geographical scope, seem likely to have been kept in the capital, perhaps at the patriarchate, where as a syncellus Demetrius could have consulted them.

Since details as precise as the exact hour when an earthquake struck are unlikely to have been remembered for long, these annals were probably kept continuously, as the annalist learned of the events he recorded. Although these particular annals seem to be lost, we have examples of fairly similar annals from this time and later.[145] The annals consulted by Demetrius may also have been kept before 1025 and after 1043, even though he used only the part of them that was relevant to his history. They would have supplied him with a chronological framework to which he could add his own recollections and perhaps material from other sources. Later John the Monk seems to have used Demetrius' chronological data for his own history, while supplementing and modifying Demetrius' account to make it less sympathetic to Demetrius himself, Zoë, Michael IV, and Constantine IX. Demetrius, John the Monk, and Scylitzes all seem to have found most of the annals' earthquakes, famines, and other phenomena too interesting to omit, and to have included the dates along with the events.

143 For Constantine's exile, see Scylitzes, p. 423.33–36.

144 Scylitzes, pp. 373.97–4 (a drought), 376.77–78 (rains), 377.4–12 (a meteor and rains), 377.26–378.34 (a supernatural voice), 384.21–28 (the discovery of an icon), 385.52–54 (a meteor), 386.65–73 (a famine and a plague), 386.74–81 (earthquakes and a meteor), 389.54–55 (an earthquake), 389.58–64 (locusts), 393.45–54 (hail and a meteor), 394.72–82 (locusts), 396.33–37 (earthquakes and a column of fire), 397.52–57 (the miraculous cure of John the Orphanotrophus), 398.83–87 (an earthquake), 399.3–6 (a severe frost and locusts), 399.19–22 (earthquakes), 400.39–49 (a drought, hail, and a famine), 402.81–84 (an earthquake and a famine), 405.76–79 (an earthquake), 408.59–63 (earthquakes, comets, wind, and rain), 411.46–50 (a drought and a fire), 413.18–414.26 (a miracle of St. Demetrius), 414.27–28 (an earthquake), 417.82–83 (earthquakes), 424.58–62 (a comet), and 433.38–39 (winds).

145 Cf. Schreiner, *Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken* I, especially nos. 3 (covering 780–1063), 5 (1083–98), 15 (913–1118), 16 (913–1118), and 17 (1057–71).

The immediate source of Scylitzes' narrative from 1025 to 1057 seems therefore to have been the history of John the Monk, who paraphrased and revised the history of Demetrius of Cyzicus from 1025 to 1043. If John the Monk followed the common practice of ending his history with the latest complete imperial reign, he wrote before the abdication of Isaac I Comnenus, in 1059. John seems to have been a contemporary historian who drew on his own recollections and the reminiscences of other contemporaries. He appears to be attested only in Scylitzes' preface, which records only that he was a monk and a Lydian. As with Nicetas the Paphlagonian and Leo "the Asian," "the Lydian" must mean that John was a native of the ancient province of Lydia. Yet he probably lived in Constantinople when he wrote, because he held decided views on contemporary figures in government and was able to use Demetrius' history, which was apparently composed in the capital and so difficult to find that nobody else is known to have read it—not even Scylitzes.

John the Monk evidently had a poor opinion of the empress Zoë and her third husband, Constantine IX, under whom Demetrius apparently wrote. The harsh treatment of Constantine VIII in Scylitzes' summary is probably attributable to John, not Demetrius. Not only was Constantine the father of Zoë, whom Demetrius seems to have wanted to please, but in Scylitzes' summary Constantine is condemned for making bad appointments, which seem to have included Demetrius' own appointment as metropolitan of Cyzicus.[146] Moreover, disapproval of the excessive power of eunuch courtiers remains a theme in Scylitzes' history throughout the presumed period of John's work, from the reign of Constantine VIII right up to the reign of Michael VI, and Demetrius would have been unlikely to include such criticism of the rulers under whom he wrote.[147] Constantine VIII is also blamed for unjustly blinding the wise and brave general Nicephorus Comnenus in a prominent passage that seems much less likely to have been written under Constantine's daughter than under Isaac I Comnenus, Nicephorus' relative.[148] Finally, Scylitzes' observation that Constantine's other daughter Theodora refused to marry Romanus III, either because they were too closely related or because he was already married, implicitly criticizes her sister Zoë for marrying the same man.[149]

Although John the Monk may have shared with Demetrius the disapproval of John the Orphanotrophus and the fairly sympathetic treatment of Romanus III in Scylitzes' summary, John the Monk and not Demetrius must be responsible for the criticism of Zoë's hasty remarriage, which required bribing the patriarch.[150] Again,

146 Scylitzes, pp. 370–71

147 Scylitzes, pp. 370.27–30 (under Constantine VIII), 390.72–74 (under Romanus III), 392.13–23 (under Michael IV), 479.4–8 and 480.31–40 (under Theodora), and 481.58–482.64 (under Michael VI).

148 Scylitzes, pp. 371.54–372.70. The precise relationship of Nicephorus to Isaac, however, is unclear; cf. *PBW*, Nikephoros 105.

149 Scylitzes, p. 374.35–38.

150 Scylitzes, pp. 390–91.

John may have taken from Demetrius much of the relatively favorable treatment of Michael IV in Scylitzes, but not the ridicule of Demetrius' own plot against the patriarch or the condemnation of Michael IV for not repudiating "the adulteress" Zoë.[151] John the Monk may also have adapted from Demetrius the unfavorable treatment of Michael V in Scylitzes' summary, though its implication that Michael should have resisted the mob that favored Zoë is likely to come from John rather than Demetrius.[152] The description in Scylitzes of the beginning of Constantine IX's reign up to 1043 is generally sympathetic to that emperor and may well have been adapted from Demetrius by John the Monk, who acknowledged that Constantine had his virtues despite his many faults.[153]

As several scholars have noticed, between 1040 and 1057 Scylitzes' account gives extensive and laudatory treatment to an important but not overwhelmingly important general, Catacalon Cecaumenus. Cecaumenus is described as fighting valiantly and giving unerring advice against the Arabs in Sicily, rioters in the capital, Russian raiders, Armenians in Ani, Seljuk Turks in the East, Pechenegs in the Balkans, and supporters of Michael VI.[154] Between 1030 and 1042, George Maniaces, Cecaumenus' commander in Sicily, receives similar approbation.[155] Demetrius of Cyzicus is unlikely to have praised Maniaces in 1043, because a year earlier the general had almost managed to overthrow Constantine IX, and if Demetrius' history ended around 1043 it obviously cannot be the source of the encomiastic treatment given to Cecaumenus from 1045 to 1057. Consequently, the writer with detailed information and a favorable opinion about Cecaumenus and Maniaces was presumably John the Monk.

After 1043, when Demetrius' history seems to have ended, Scylitzes' account deals chiefly with wars in which Cecaumenus fought. First it describes the origins of wars with the king of Ani and the emir of Dvin, then the course of those wars, from 1044 and 1047, their interruption by the military revolt of Leo Tornices, in 1047, the origins of wars with the Turks, the course of those wars, from 1047 to 1048, the origins of wars with the Pechenegs, and those wars themselves, in 1047–48. Next come two campaigns in which Cecaumenus took no part: a Turkish raid on the empire, misdated to 1048 instead of 1054, and a war of uncertain date with the emir of Dvin.[156] The narrative then turns to more warfare with the Pechenegs, in 1049–53, interrupted by shorter notices on two military conspiracies against Constantine IX and a repetition of the Turkish raid of 1054 in its proper place. The treatment of Constantine's reign concludes with a description of the emperor's extravagance, his demobilization of the army in Iberia, his charities, and his death.

[151] Scylitzes, pp. 397.64–398.74.
[152] Scylitzes, p. 419.41–52.
[153] Scylitzes, pp. 476.59–73.
[154] See Shepard, "Suspected Source" and "Scylitzes," and *PBW*, Katakalon 101.
[155] Scylitzes, pp. 381–82, 403, 405–6, 422, and 425–28.
[156] Scylitzes, pp. 462–64; on the misdating, which may be the result either of misremembering by Cecaumenus or of misunderstanding by John the Monk, see Flusin and Cheynet, *Jean Scylitzès*, pp. 382 n. 165 and 391 n. 195.

The account of the reign of Theodora (1055–56) is disproportionately short, while that of the reign of Michael VI (1056–57), though disproportionately long, deals mainly with the successful revolt of Isaac Comnenus, which Cecaumenus joined. Most of this information seems to derive directly or indirectly from Cecaumenus himself, including what other officers had told him.[157]

After 1043 Scylitzes cites several years of the indiction but few dates by the month or day. The exceptions are August and September, especially August 31 and September 1, Christmas Day, the feast of the Forty Martyrs of Sebastea, on March 9, June 8 in both 1050 and 1057, and Saturday, September 8, 1048.[158] For any Byzantine August 31 and September 1 were easy days to remember, because they began and ended indictions. Christmas Day was obviously memorable, but so was the feast of the Forty Martyrs. June 8 also had a special significance for military men, because it was the feast of the translation of the relics of the military saint Theodore Stratelates. Catacalon Cecaumenus would also have been likely to remember Saturday, September 8, 1048, because it caused his heated argument with the Iberian prince Liparites, who unsuccessfully resisted fighting on that day, claiming it was inauspicious. These dates may not all be accurate, because Scylitzes says Cecaumenus took possession of Constantinople for Isaac Comnenus on "Wednesday," August 31, 1057, which was actually a Sunday.[159] Yet all the dates could have been remembered (or misremembered) by Cecaumenus.

The suggestion has been made that Scylitzes' source was an encomiastic biography of Cecaumenus written before 1060, perhaps by Cecaumenus himself in the third person.[160] Scylitzes, evidently copying his source, does appear to assume at the end of his narrative that Michael VI was still alive, though the deposed emperor was almost certainly dead by 1060, and probably by 1059.[161] Yet the two-year reign of Isaac Comnenus seems too short a time to allow for the composition both of a biography of Cecaumenus and of a history by John the Monk that used it. Admittedly, the problem that Scylitzes fails to mention the biography

[157] For example, the extended treatment of how Ervevius Phrangopulus (Hervé the Frank) was refused the rank of magister, deserted to the Turks, and was betrayed by them (Scylitzes, pp. 484–86) must derive from Hervé himself after his return to the empire. Note that Hervé had served with Cecaumenus against the Pechenegs in 1049 (Scylitzes, p. 467.4–8) and that he must have returned to the empire after Michael VI's fall, because a seal shows that he later received the rank of magister, which Michael had refused him; see *PBW*, Hervé 101.

[158] Scylitzes, pp. 434.51–52 (Forty Martyrs, March 9, 1044), 435.72 (13th indiction, 1044/45), 439.10–11 (1st indiction, September 1047), 442.82–83 (Christmas 1047), 452.65–66 (Saturday, September 18, 2nd indiction, 1048), 469.65 (beginning of 3rd indiction, A.M. 6558, September 1049), 470.72 (June 8, 1050), 473.63 (4th and 5th indictions, 1050–52), 477.74–75 (7th and 8th indictions, 1053–55), 477.76 (summer of the 7th indiction, 1054), 480.28–29 (9th indiction, A.M. 6564, around the end of August 1056), 481.42–43 (August 31, 9th indiction, 1056), 489.78 (June 8, 10th indiction, 1057), 500.84–85 (Wednesday [actually Sunday], August 31, 10th indiction, 1057), and 500.89–90 (September 1, 1057).

[159] Shepard, "Isaac Comnenus' Coronation Day," pp. 27–28, plausibly proposes repunctuating Thurn's text of Scylitzes, p. 500.84, to put a comma after γενομένου.

[160] Shepard, "Suspected Source," pp. 176–80.

[161] Shepard, "Isaac Comnenus' Coronation Day," pp. 24–25.

in his preface could be avoided by supposing that John the Monk was either Cecaumenus' biographer or Cecaumenus' pseudonym as an autobiographer.[162] Yet most of Scylitzes' account of the years from 1025 to 1057 has nothing to do with Cecaumenus and would not have been recorded by someone primarily interested in him. Nor do we need to suppose a literary source for such recent material. One passage clearly suggests oral sources for what Michael VI's envoys told Cecaumenus in 1057: "That [the envoys] did this, well-informed persons also affirmed, men who were not of a sort to lie."[163]

John the Monk seems not only to have gathered information from the empire's military officers but largely to have shared their point of view. Apparently he disagreed so strongly with Demetrius of Cyzicus that he sought to supersede Demetrius' history rather than continue it from 1043 to 1057, though John appears to have been content to continue the history of Theodore of Sebastea instead of rewriting it. John disapproved of Constantine IX, Theodora, and Michael VI, and thought the officers' rebellion that replaced Michael with Isaac I Comnenus was fully justified. In particular, John believed that Constantine IX's demobilization of around fifty thousand soldiers in the Armenian themes was a fatal mistake, a view shared by Michael Attaliates and whatever member of the Cecaumenus family wrote the treatise known as the *Strategicon*. Constantine's demobilization proved so catastrophic that its significance has often escaped modern scholars inclined to think rulers must have good reasons for their actions.[164]

Scylitzes' summaries seem to be so faithful that his text preserves some clues to John the Monk's prose style. John wrote in Atticizing Greek, to judge from the fact that six of the seven instances of the dual in Scylitzes' history come from the part after 1025, which forms just a quarter of the whole.[165] Although John sometimes used classicizing names, like "Media" for Vaspurakan, he also transliterated Armenian, Arab, and Turkish names accurately enough that most of their original forms can be deciphered. He seems to have used few literary references but to have liked traditional proverbs, eight of which appear in the part of Scylitzes' summary after 1025.[166] Despite being a monk, John apparently made little if any use

[162] I disagree with Shepard, "Suspected Source," p. 180, that "Scylitzes does not mention the two works on which he did draw heavily, Theophanes Continuatus and a lost history of the 10th-century Phocas family," because I believe that Scylitzes named Theodore Daphnopates as the author of *Theophanes Continuatus* (see above, pp. 176–79 and 189–90) and that the "lost history" of the Phocas family was an oral source of Leo the Deacon and in any case not used by Scylitzes. (See above, pp. 239–40.) On the contrary, Scylitzes' preface, far from omitting sources that he used, cites sources that he did not use; see below, pp. 332–35.

[163] Scylitzes, p. 497.13–14, a passage discussed by Shepard, "Suspected Source," p. 176 and n. 16, who adopts a slightly different reading that does not affect the point made here.

[164] See Scylitzes, p. 476 (though at least the words ἔκτοτε καὶ μέχρι τῆς δεῦρο in line 57 were probably added by Scylitzes himself), Attaliates, *History*, pp. 44–45, Cecaumenus, *Strategicon* II.50, and Treadgold, *Byzantium*, pp. 80–83 and 215–19.

[165] See p. 257 and n. 130 above, and the index on p. 564 of Thurn's edition of Scylitzes under *Declinatio: dualis*.

[166] See Scylitzes, pp. 400.31, 410.31–33, 426.29–30, 451.41, 459.68–69, 481.46–47, 484.38, and 487.20(?). The only other literary reference identified by Thurn in his edition

of scriptural quotations. Though Scylitzes copied a number of biblical references from *Theophanes Continuatus*, the *Life of Basil*, and Genesius, not one reference to the Bible seems to appear in the part of his history after 1025.[167] Thus John the Monk seems to have received the sort of classical secondary education that usually led to a career in the civil service. His strong opinions on the emperors after Basil II, combined with his limited knowledge of their personalities and motives, seem to show that John had been a civil servant whose duties seldom brought him in contact with emperors until near the end of Constantine IX's reign.

By contrast, Scylitzes' summary suggests that John the Monk served as a senior official in Constantinople from 1054 to 1057, even if John disapproved of the rulers whom he served. Scylitzes gives confidential details of the power struggles around the deathbeds of Constantine IX, in 1054–55, and of Theodora, in 1055–56, although the results, which brought the accessions of Theodora and Michael VI, are depicted as unfortunate.[168] Scylitzes' narrative of the abortive revolt of the proedrus Theodosius against Michael VI, in 1056, is so circumstantial that it seems to have come from an eyewitness, at a time when Cecaumenus and the other Anatolian generals were not present in the capital.[169] Then Scylitzes' account of the last days of Michael's reign, in 1057, shows knowledge of the emperor's desperate attempts to save his throne that the generals rebelling against him could not have known, at least at the time.[170] We may therefore guess that John the Monk was promoted from a lower to a higher office in the civil service not long before 1054, retained that post until 1057, and then became a monk, probably because he was too closely associated with the old regime to be trusted by the new one.

John seems not to have written his history in the hope of winning the favor of the new emperor, Isaac I. According to Scylitzes' summary, all the rebel generals in 1057 agreed that Catacalon Cecaumenus was best qualified to be emperor, though he modestly declined and proclaimed Isaac instead.[171] Such a statement cannot have been gratifying to Isaac, and it would hardly have been added by Scylitzes, who wrote some thirty years later under Isaac's nephew Alexius I. Besides, we know that Catacalon Cecaumenus became a monk with the monastic name Callinicus soon after 1057, probably because he had lost favor with Isaac.[172] What John appears to have done is to write a history in which he expressed his own views about the emperors under whom he had served and about their officials and generals, especially Cecaumenus, whom John is likely to have known personally. Quite possibly by 1057 John was elderly and ready to retire to a monastery after a long and frustrating career in the bureaucracy.

of Scylitzes is to Archilochus at Scylitzes, p. 480.36–37, and even this may have appeared in some collection of proverbs known to John.

[167] See Thurn's index of quotations on p. 570 of his edition of Scylitzes.

[168] Scylitzes, pp. 477–78 and 480.

[169] Scylitzes, pp. 481–82.

[170] Scylitzes, pp. 496–500.

[171] Scylitzes, p. 487.

[172] See *PBW*, Katakalon 101, and Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, p. 53.

John's name was of course extremely common, and it may well be a monastic name, different from his baptismal one. Since he appears not to have mentioned himself in the course of his history, we must resort to the usual guesswork to reconstruct his life.[173] His indignation at the corruption of Constantine VIII's administration may mean that John had served in the bureaucracy not just under Constantine but earlier, so that he could compare Constantine's rule unfavorably with that of Basil II. If so, John may have been born somewhere in Lydia around 1000 or a bit before, obtained a good secondary education in Constantinople, and joined the civil service by 1020. If his career was less successful than he had hoped, his annoyance may have affected his views about some of those whom he described. By 1054 he seems to have risen far enough in the bureaucracy to have access to important discussions at court. Around 1057 he apparently retired to a monastery, presumably in Constantinople, where he finished his history before 1059, still under Isaac I. John's main sources were probably his own memory, the earlier history of Demetrius of Cyzicus, and the recollections of military officers whom he met or had known in the capital, especially Catacalon Cecaumenus.[174] Cecaumenus may even have suggested that John write his history to set the record straight.

Besides these formal histories and some very cursory chronicles, two moderately significant chronicles belong to this general period. First, the "Chronicle of Cambridge," conventionally named for the location of one of its two manuscripts, is a brief account of the Arab conquest of Sicily and Calabria.[175] Its actual title is *Short Chronography from the Time When the Saracens Came to Sicily*. It extends from the Arabs' first invasion of Sicily, in 827, to their capture of Cosenza, in Calabria, in 987, with an added entry in one manuscript about their sack of Monte Cassino, in 1031. Although according to a note in one of our manuscripts our version was compiled in 999, it presumably depended on annals kept by several redactors over the course of a century and a half in the parts of Sicily and Calabria still held by the Byzantines. We may guess that its redactors were monks, since such annals seem likely to have been kept in a monastery. The subject is chiefly military history, as may be expected of any record kept in a region gripped by unremitting

173 The only figure in Scylitzes' history who could conceivably be John the Monk is a certain John Opsaras the Patrician, a financial official sent by Michael VI to pay the army in 1057 (Scylitzes, pp. 487–88). Yet Scylitzes never hints that his source was Opsaras, and an author with a family name would have been likely to use it instead of identifying himself only by his birthplace, as John the Monk evidently did.

174 That John used written memoirs by Catacalon is unlikely, because John was well informed about Catacalon right up to September 1057 and finished his history before November 1059, and two years seems too little time to allow for Catacalon to write memoirs and John to write a history based on them.

175 For a combined edition of the Greek versions of this chronicle with an introduction, see Schreiner, *Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken* I, pp. 326–42 (no. 45). For editions of all three versions (Greek and Arabic) with an Italian translation and commentary, see Cozza-Luzi, *Cronaca*. See also Vasiliev et al., *Byzance* II, pp. 342–46, and III.2, pp. 99–106, and Zuretti, "Due note."

war. The chronicle is so terse, sometimes to the point of being obscure, that it may have been abridged from a longer version. Its simple Greek is without literary pretensions. Eventually it was translated into Arabic.

The "Chronicle of Brussels," again conventionally named for the location of its manuscript, is more like a literary work. Its original title was apparently *Summary Chronicle about Those Romans Who Were Emperors*.[176] Introduced by very brief notices on the Roman emperors from Julius Caesar to Diocletian, the main section, subtitled "Those Who Were Emperors in Constantinople," has rather longer notices on the emperors from Constantine I to Romanus III. Its praise for the morals and wisdom of Romanus III, a ruler not otherwise known as particularly virtuous or wise, indicates that the writer was a contemporary of his.[177] Since the chronicler concludes by recording the length of Romanus' reign, he evidently finished his work between 1034 and 1041, during the reign of the next emperor, Michael IV. A special interest in events in Constantinople and specifically in the relics of St. John the Baptist seems to show that the author lived in the capital, perhaps as a monk of the Monastery of Studius, which was dedicated to that saint.[178] The chronicler's main source was the chronicle of Symeon the Logothete, but he seems also to have used a lost city chronicle of Constantinople with a few facts otherwise unknown to us, notably the exact date of the Russian raid on Constantinople in 860.[179] The chronicle is the first source known to have applied the epithet "Bulgar-Slayer" to Basil II.[180] Showing some interest in literary matters, the chronicler refers to Hermes Trismegistus, Orpheus, and Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* and uses a few Atticizing forms.[181]

If we exclude the "Chronicle of Cambridge" and the "Chronicle of Brussels," six formal contemporary histories appear to have been written during the ninety-odd years before Michael Psellus began his brilliant *Chronography*, around 1060.[182]

[176] On this chronicle, see Cumont, *Chroniques*, especially pp. 13–36, with his edition of the text on pp. 16–34, and Külzer, "Studien," with corrections to Cumont's text on p. 425. In the title, I assume that the word ἑτέρα was added by the copyist because the chronicle of Constantine Manasses precedes this chronicle in the MS.

[177] Cumont, *Chroniques*, p. 34.22–23 (Romanus III was χρηστὸς τοῖς ἤθεσι καὶ σοφὸς τῷ λόγῳ).

[178] Cumont, *Chroniques*, pp. 15–16 and 19.11–13 (the relics of the Baptist), 20.11–13 (the head of the Baptist), 26.3–6 (the right hand of the Baptist), and 26.8–12 (the Church of the Baptist in Hebdomon).

[179] See Cumont, *Chroniques*, pp. 13–14 and 33.16–21 and n. 2, and Külzer, "Studien," pp. 422–24.

[180] Cumont, *Chroniques*, p. 34.16 (Basil Βουλγαροκτόνος). The attempt of Stephenson, *Legend*, pp. 68–70, to redate the "Chronicle of Brussels," or at any rate Basil's epithet in it, has no basis but Stephenson's own assertions, like his similar attempt to reject the independent testimony of Cecaumenus and Scylitzes (from Theodore of Sebastea) for Basil's blinding of Bulgarian prisoners. (See p. 256 and n. 127 above.)

[181] Cumont, *Chroniques*, pp. 20.4–7 (Hermes Trismegistus, Orpheus), 21.6–10 (Heliodorus), 32.10 (γλωττοτομήσασα), and 33.20 (ἡττήθησαν).

[182] I also exclude Pseudo-Symeon, who for contemporary affairs merely copied Symeon the Logothete's chronicle.

While this number is not especially small by middle Byzantine standards, a more striking fact is that all but one of the six, the *History* of Leo the Deacon, are lost today in their original form. Moreover, Leo's history is rather less than brilliant, and nothing that survives from the lost histories of Nicephorus the Deacon, Theodore of Side, Theodore of Sebastea, Demetrius of Cyzicus, or John the Monk suggests much brilliance either. While admittedly none of their predecessors since the sixth century had been truly inspired historians, the history of the empire up to the mid-tenth century had not been very inspiring. From about 1050 Byzantium enjoyed extraordinary success, but Byzantine authors continued to write ordinary histories.

Leo the Deacon composed a classicizing contemporary history of the same general type as those of Procopius and Agathias, though shorter and less ambitious. To what extent the other five historians did the same is uncertain, since their original texts are lost. They all seem to have written in classicizing Greek. Nicephorus the Deacon probably wrote a history of much the same type as Leo the Deacon, and did it first and possibly better. Theodore of Side seems mostly to have summarized earlier histories, as Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, Symeon the Logothete, and Pseudo-Symeon had done before. Theodore of Sebastea wrote contemporary history, but as a short continuation of his uncle's work rather than a full and formal treatment. Demetrius of Cyzicus and John the Monk apparently wrote one-book histories that continued the work of Theodore of Sebastea, much as he had continued the work of Theodore of Side. None of these authors wrote a history of epic proportions in dramatic detail, as certainly could have been done for the wars of their times.

While of course chance plays a role in the appearance of talented historians, these writers' main limitation seems to have been not their talent but their view of the age on which they wrote and in which they lived. They seem not to have regarded the extensive conquests of Nicephorus Phocas, John Tzimisces, and Basil II as achievements of great interest. To be sure, a case can be made that those rulers' conquests in Bulgaria, most of Armenia, and much of Syria were more trouble than they were worth. Yet a case can also be made that Justinian's conquests in Africa, Italy, and Spain were more trouble than they were worth; that was more or less the final judgment of Procopius, who nonetheless made Justinian's wars the subject of a compelling history. Procopius shared with Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius, Arrian, and other classical historians a belief that major wars were important even if they were disastrous. That importance seems to have been less obvious to the historians of the age of Byzantine expansion. One reason must be that, even if some of their main sources were generals, none of these historians was himself a military man, as Procopius and most of his great predecessors had been. These later Byzantines were accordingly less sure of themselves when they wrote military history, and less interested in it.

Another reason for the relative mediocrity of these half-dozen histories may be that none of their authors was much interested in history at all. The main motive of Nicephorus the Deacon, Leo the Deacon, Theodore of Side, and Demetrius of Cyzicus in writing their histories was probably to win the favor of the reigning

emperor. Theodore of Sebastea seems to have brought the history of his uncle up to date without much enthusiasm. John the Monk's motives are less clear, but his history may possibly have been commissioned by Catacalon Cecaumenus. At around this time, the court intellectual John Mauropus wrote in an epigram that he was abandoning the idea of writing a history in order to avoid telling laudatory lies.[183] While Mauropus may have been renouncing a formal imperial commission, his implication that histories were as a rule written to please the powerful still seems significant. Scylitzes implies in his preface that most of the histories he summarized were unsatisfactory because they concentrated on praising emperors or others. While authors writing mainly to promote their careers may produce noteworthy literature, they seldom do so without having a genuine enthusiasm for their subject, as these historians seem not to have had. In fact, most Byzantines seem to have been largely indifferent to the reconquests of the tenth and eleventh centuries.[184]

[183] See Karpozilos, *Letters*, pp. 9–27, on John's life, especially p. 15 on his history, and for his epigram, see Karpozilos, *Συμβολή*, pp. 96–97 (text on p. 96). The fact that Mauropus was born in Paphlagonia is a decisive argument against identifying him with John the Monk.

[184] See my remarks on the Byzantines' general disapproval of warfare in Treadgold, "Byzantium," especially pp. 227–28: "None of the great Byzantine reconquerors was truly popular. … Nicephorus II was murdered. John I was probably poisoned. Basil II faced a large-scale revolt three years after he finished conquering Bulgaria. … In the Byzantines' opinion, not even victory quite justified a foreign war, even if it was a war of reconquest."

8
Michael Psellus

Michael Psellus was the first of the three great historians of the middle Byzantine period and an important influence on the other two, Anna Comnena and Nicetas Choniates. We have seen that Psellus was preceded by about thirty middle Byzantine historians, of whom only about half wrote histories that survive complete. These thirty included a few good scholars, notably George Syncellus, Ignatius the Deacon, and Photius, and a few good stylists, notably Photius, Leo the Deacon, and Theodore Daphnopates (if he was the author of the *Life of Basil* and the first four books of *Theophanes Continuatus*). We could probably expand the list of good stylists, and perhaps the list of good scholars, if we had full texts of some historians whose works have been lost, especially Trajan the Patrician, Theognostus the Grammarian, and Manuel the Protospatharius. What we know of the histories of Trajan, Sergius Confessor, and Nicetas the Paphlagonian suggests that they were at least amusingly opinionated. Yet if we consider surviving texts together with summaries of lost ones, we have no reason to think that any writer from the seventh century to the mid-eleventh was an historian to rank with Ammianus or Procopius, or even with Socrates of Constantinople or Evagrius Scholasticus.

Psellus was more than just a great historian. He was also a distinguished politician, philosopher, theologian, jurist, orator, and physician. While Photius too had been all of those, Psellus surpassed him both as a writer and as a thinker. Of course Photius never tried to write a formal history; that his informal *Bibliotheca* is the nearest thing we have to a Byzantine history of literature attests to Photius' learning and intelligence but also reveals a blind spot in Byzantine scholarship, which valued culture without quite recognizing that it had developed in a way that could be recorded. If during his final exile Photius had tried to continue the history of his father, Sergius Confessor, into the reigns of Theophilus, Michael III, and Basil I, the result would doubtless have been a remarkable document, and might possibly have deserved comparison with Psellus' *Chronography*. Yet unlike the history that Photius could have written, Psellus' *Chronography* really was written, and is a masterwork like nothing else by a Byzantine author. Psellus' *Concise History*, though far inferior to the *Chronography* both as history and as literature, is also in its way unique.

Psellus' career

The evidence for Psellus' life in his own works is so extensive that modern scholars have yet to exploit it fully.[1] Most of the biographical references appear in his *Chronography*, his letters, his eulogy for his mother, and his funeral oration for his daughter. Yet though Psellus liked to write about himself, none of his writings is explicitly autobiographical, and in them he naturally shapes and selects what he says about himself. His literary style is even more allusive and obscure than that of most learned Byzantines, and shows a particular aversion to mentioning names and dates. Moreover, both his career and the political and intellectual world in which he lived were unusually complex. As a skillful courtier under a series of insecure absolute monarchs, Psellus could afford neither complete candor nor a reputation for deception; thus we should neither take everything he says at face value nor reject it without a good reason. Other Byzantine writers have relatively little to say about him, probably because he was not quite as important a politician or as sympathetic a personality as he wanted his readers to think.

Psellus was born at Constantinople in 1018, when Basil II was finishing his conquest of Bulgaria.[2] Christened Constantine Psellus, he was the third child and first son of young, good-looking, and prosperous parents. His maternal grandparents lived in the capital, but his paternal grandparents seem already to have died. His mother, Theodote, appears to have come from a richer and more distinguished family than her husband did, and she had rejected wealthier suitors.[3] Although Psellus insists that his father was descended from "consuls and patricians," the ancestors who had been high officials seem not to have included Psellus' father, who probably held a lower-ranking office. Psellus was eager to depict himself as a thorough Constantinopolitan, to the point of claiming, not very credibly, that before he was sixteen he had never been outside the city walls.[4] On the other hand, he seems to be the "Michael of Nicomedia" mentioned by Michael Attaliates, who calls him "unpleasant and arrogant" and says that his family came from that town, near Constantinople.[5] Perhaps Attaliates, himself a provincial, called Psellus "Michael of Nicomedia" as a reminder that the father of this self-important snob

[1] See especially Kaldellis, *Mothers*, pp. 3–16, M. Jeffreys, "Psellos," Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα*, pp. 11–186, and "Michael Psellos," *PBW*, Michael 61, Moore, *Iter*, Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* III, pp. 59–112 (with references to the rest of the large secondary literature), Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 372–82, and Beck, *Kirche*, pp. 538–42.

[2] See Psellus, *Chronography* III.25 (he was "not quite 16" at the time of Romanus III's death, on April 11, 1034) and VI.36 (he was 25 at the time of Constantine IX's accession, on June 11, 1042), showing that he was born between April 11 and June 11 of 1018.

[3] Psellus, *Eulogy* 3d and 4b.

[4] Psellus, *Eulogy* 15a.

[5] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 296–97. Note that Attaliates, *History*, pp. 187–88, describes himself as a close friend of Basil Maleses, who in his opinion (p. 192) was unjustly exiled under Michael VII. According to the plausible reconstruction of Vries–van der Velden, "Psellos et son gendre," Psellus was Basil's father-in-law but made no use of his influence to help Basil in his time of disgrace; this may be the main reason for Attaliates' dislike of Psellus. Further on Maleses, see below, p. 280.

had come from the provinces.[6] In that case, the high-ranking ancestors of Psellus' father were probably on his mother's side, and his provincial background may explain his failure to advance very far in the bureaucracy. While the Psellus family may have owned land around Nicomedia, they were not members of the higher civil aristocracy, as the patriarch Nicephorus, Photius, or Genesius had been.

Psellus was fond of his mild-mannered father and kindly elder sister, and particularly attached to his strong-willed mother, who recognized his phenomenal talents when he was still an infant. She seems to have taught him to read by herself before he was four, when she sent him to a nearby monastery for his elementary education. At the early age of eight he went to secondary school, where within a year he memorized the entire *Iliad*.[7] His parents' care with his classical education shows that they must have intended him for a career in the civil service. By the age of fifteen he had seen the emperor Romanus III several times and spoken with him once.[8] After Psellus finished his secondary schooling, at sixteen, he was apparently sent to study rhetoric with the learned judge of the Theme of Thrace; but his parents recalled him because of the death of his elder sister, which deeply grieved the whole family.[9] Psellus continued his study of rhetoric at Constantinople, where his principal teacher was John Mauropus and John Xiphilinus was a fellow student—two men who became Psellus' lifelong friends and colleagues. Psellus also studied philosophy, theology, astrology, medicine, and almost any other subject for which he could find teachers or books. He claims to have taught himself philosophy by reading Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Porphyry, and Proclus.[10]

Early in the reign of Michael IV (1034–41), Psellus obtained a position as an imperial secretary.[11] Handsome, well-spoken, well-educated, and self-assured,

[6] The identification of Psellus with Attaliates' "Michael of Nicomedia" remains controversial; cf. most recently Karpozilos, "When Did Michael Psellus Die?" (in favor of the identification), and Kaldellis, "Date of Psellos' Death" (against the identification). It strains credulity, however, to think that there were two monks named Michael who held the rare rank of *hypertimos*, had been imperial secretaries, played a leading role in government under Constantine X, and died in or around 1078, and none of the arguments against the identification seems conclusive. That Attaliates, *History*, p. 21, describes Psellus as the most learned man of his time without naming him suggests that Attaliates only reluctantly gave Psellus credit for his learning and may well have found him an unpleasant person; and the testimony of Attaliates, *History*, pp. 180–81, that Michael of Nicomedia and the eunuch Nicephoritzes were rivals under Constantine X is entirely compatible with what we otherwise know of the fraught relations between Psellus and Nicephoritzes.

[7] Psellus, *Eulogy* 1c and 10b (taught to read by his mother), 5b (elementary education), 5c–d (secondary school), and 6b (memorization of the *Iliad*). Psellus, *Letter* 135, pp. 378–79, mentions that he was born near the Monastery τὰ Ναρσοῦ and "was educated in it" (ἀνατέθραμμαι ἐν αὐτῇ), which must refer to his elementary education, since monks would not have taught secular literature. On this monastery, see Janin, *Géographie*, p. 360.

[8] Psellus, *Chronography* III.1 and 25.

[9] Psellus, *Eulogy* 15a–16a.

[10] See the section of "intellectual autobiography" in Psellus, *Chronography* VI.36–46.

[11] Note that Psellus, *Chronography* V.27, says that by 1042 he had been an imperial secretary "for a long time" (πόρρωθεν).

the young secretary made a good impression at court. He attended state banquets with other ranking officials and soon made friends who were close to the emperor.[12] Fascinated by court gossip, he learned the details of the love affair between the empress Zoë and the future Michael IV "from one of those who lived in the imperial chambers at the time, a man who knew the whole sexual history of the empress." This man was presumably a palace eunuch and the same person who told Psellus that Michael stopped sleeping with Zoë after he became emperor.[13] Psellus' acquaintances seem also to have included a bath attendant who told him the story of the drowning of Romanus III, imperial guardsmen who told of hiding Michael IV when he had epileptic fits, and a butler who observed that even as Caesar the future Michael V never dined privately with the emperor. Psellus also says he knew astrologers who complained that Michael V had ignored their warnings not to pursue ambitious plans.[14] When a popular uprising overthrew Michael, in 1042, Psellus left the palace, where he had been dictating imperial letters, to follow the mob while it hounded Michael to the Monastery of Studius. As both an acquaintance of the fugitive emperor and a friend of the commander of the guards sent to arrest him, Psellus briefly found himself talking to both sides before the mob had Michael and his uncle blinded.[15]

By this time twenty-five years old, Psellus quickly won the favor of the new emperor, Constantine IX Monomachus (1042–55), who relied heavily on his advisers, particularly his capable minister Constantine Lichudes.[16] Having impressed Lichudes by his abilities and charmed the emperor by his eloquence, Psellus became the emperor's frequent companion, counselor, and speechwriter. The emperor promoted Psellus from junior secretary to the head of his department as protoasecretis, showered him with gifts, and bestowed on him a splendid house that had belonged to Constantine Ducas, a future emperor who became Psellus' friend.[17] Around this time Psellus married a wife of whom we know little more than that she came from a distinguished family and bore him a daughter named

[12] Psellus, *Chronography* IV.14 and 38.

[13] Psellus, *Chronography* III.23 and IV.17.

[14] Cf. Psellus, *Chronography* III.26 (Romanus' drowning), 18 (Michael's epileptic fits), 25 (Michael V's exclusion), and V.19–20 (Michael's astrologers), all passages that evidently depend on eyewitness accounts. Psellus, *Chronography* VI.44, declares that around 1042 all the imperial guardsmen knew him.

[15] Psellus, *Chronography* V.27 and 39–50.

[16] On Lichudes, see *PBW*, Konstantinos 13.

[17] Psellus, *Chronography* VIIa.7. Evidently the emperor owned a number of houses in the capital that he distributed to his protégés (cf. *Theophanes Continuatus* I.3 for the houses that Nicephorus I gave to Leo the Armenian and Michael the Amorian); Ducas received an even grander house in exchange for the one he left to Psellus. I am not persuaded by the argument of Riedinger, "Quatre étapes," pp. 47–59, that in the title of Psellus, *Oratoria* 8, παρῃτήσατο must mean that Psellus "refused" the office of protoasecretis rather than "resigned from" it, since Psellus often uses words in unusual senses and the case that he was protoasecretis otherwise seems convincing; see most recently Kaldellis, "Date of Psellos' Death," p. 661 n. 35.

Styliane, who entranced him.[18] By his accomplishments and merits, Psellus had risen to the highest level of Constantinopolitan society.

With duties no heavier than Photius or Theodore Daphnopates had had when they held the title of protoasecretis, Psellus offered free instruction in rhetoric and philosophy to various bright young men, while his friend John Xiphilinus kept a similar school for the law. In 1047 Constantine IX awarded their two schools the status of state institutions with suitable salaries and resources, granting Psellus the grand title of "Consul of the Philosophers" and Xiphilinus that of "Guardian of the Law." Around this time Psellus also received the honorific title of *hypertimos* ("highly honorable"), which he enjoyed using for the rest of his life.[19] He apparently resigned his position as protoasecretis and used his professorship to deliver some hundred and fifty lectures that still survive, dealing chiefly with theology, as well as many lectures on other subjects that must have been lost.[20] At the age of thirty, Psellus found himself on confidential terms with the emperor, recognized as the greatest scholar of his day, delighted with his pretty little daughter, and enjoying the stimulating friendship of other court intellectuals like Lichudes, Xiphilinus, and his old teacher John Mauropus.

Yet Psellus' good fortune mainly depended on the unpredictable Constantine IX, whose health and judgment were both growing worse. Already in 1047 Psellus noticed that Constantine suffered from a severe case of gout, which slowly grew more debilitating.[21] The emperor became strongly attached to his buffoonish and disloyal bodyguard Romanus Boïlas, whom Psellus and his fellow courtiers had to pretend to find amusing.[22] Though Psellus warned Constantine Lichudes that the frivolous and profligate emperor was growing impatient with Lichudes' sober administration, the minister refused to humor his superior and was replaced around 1050 by a poorly educated young eunuch whom Psellus despised.[23] Meanwhile the enthusiasm for pagan learning that Psellus shared with his friends

[18] On Psellus' wife, see Kaldellis, *Mothers*, pp. 12–14, suggesting plausibly that her descent from "those registered among the fathers of emperors" (Psellus, *Funeral Oration*, p. 63) may refer to Stylianus Zaützes, who held the title of βασιλεοπάτωρ ("emperor's father," to be understood figuratively) under Leo VI and whose rare Christian name would explain the rare name of Psellus' daughter, Styliane. Our only real evidence for the date of Psellus' marriage is that his daughter was nine years old when she died, probably in early 1054, so that Psellus was presumably married by 1044. (Unlike Kaldellis, *Mothers*, p. 13, I see nothing in Psellus, *Funeral Oration*, p. 87, to imply that Psellus and his wife had long been childless when Styliane was born.)

[19] Contrary to the belief of Karpozilos, "When Did Michael Psellus Die?" pp. 673–75, this title seems to date from before Psellus' tonsure; see Garzya, "On Michael Psellus' Admission," p. 42.

[20] See Psellus, *Chronography* VI.43 (his free teaching), and Attaliates, *History*, p. 21 (Constantine IX's schools), Psellus, *Eulogy* 30a–d (the subjects of his teaching), Kaldellis, "Date of Psellos' Theological Lectures," and Riedinger, "Quatre étapes," pp. 37–47.

[21] Psellus, *Chronography* VI.106 and 127–33.

[22] Psellus, *Chronography* VI.139–55; for Romanus' name, which Psellus omits, see Zonaras XVII.27.2–15, and *PBW*, Romanos 62.

[23] Psellus, *Chronography* VI.177–81; for the name of Lichudes' replacement, John the Logothete, which Psellus omits, see Zonaras XVII.28.10–16, and *PBW*, Ioannes 115.

had attracted the hostility of some of the clergy in the capital, who were apparently supported by the powerful and ambitious patriarch of Constantinople Michael Cerularius. When Psellus had to provide sworn assurances of his orthodoxy and apparently to retire from teaching, he, Xiphilinus, and Mauropus grew anxious about what their enemies might do to them if the emperor failed to protect them or died.[24] Since simply retiring from court would have risked offending him, they decided that if any of them came into real danger all of them would become monks.[25] Soon thereafter, the capricious emperor appointed Mauropus metropolitan of Euchaïta against his will.[26]

Around this time Psellus was further shaken by the deaths of his parents and daughter within a few years of each other. First his father fell ill, entered a monastery as many Byzantines did when they thought they were dying, and died, greatly distressing Psellus until he dreamed that he saw his father in Paradise, dressed as a monk. Next Psellus' mother became ill, entered a convent, died, and appeared to her son in a dream in which she commended him to the great abbot St. Basil of Caesarea.[27] Psellus was, however, most affected by the loss of his daughter, Styliane, his only child, who by early 1054 died at the age of nine of a horrible and disfiguring disease, apparently smallpox. He particularly regretted that she had not survived until she was old enough to marry, and tried to console himself by adopting another girl of a similar age, betrothing her to the adolescent son of a senior official, and launching this prospective son-in-law on a career in the bureaucracy.[28] Psellus seems not to have thought of having more children of his own, though his wife was still alive and in her thirties. He must already have decided to be tonsured, following the examples of his father and mother and of his friend John Xiphilinus, who had just retired to a monastery on Mount Olympus, in Bithynia, after pretending to be ill. Psellus too feigned illness to the dismayed Constantine IX and became a monk on Olympus, separating from his wife and taking the monastic name of Michael.[29]

[24] See Vries–van der Velden, "Amitiés," pp. 332–37, Kaldellis, *Hellenism*, pp. 191–202, and Garzya, "On Michael Psellus' Admission" (with the text of Psellus' assurances of orthodoxy).

[25] Psellus, *Chronography* VI.191–94, omitting the names of his two friends. The identification of Xiphilinus is secure, and that of Mauropus is highly probable; see *PBW*, Ioannes 18 (Xiphilinus) and Ioannes 289 (Mauropus).

[26] On Mauropus' still somewhat mysterious appointment as metropolitan of Euchaïta, see especially Karpozilos, *Letters*, pp. 15–27.

[27] Psellus, *Eulogy* 19–20 (his father's death and his dream of his father) and 23 (his mother's death) and 26 (his dream of his mother). I agree with Kaldellis, *Mothers*, p. 35, that, despite the impression Psellus tries to give, his parents, "like many other Byzantines of perfectly ordinary faith, took monastic vows only when they perceived that their end was near"—but not that Theodote became a nun "long" after her husband, since *Eulogy* 21a and 22d only assert that she had *wanted* to become a nun for a long time. On the contrary, *Eulogy* 19a shows that Psellus' studies in medicine (c. 1040?) had occurred "long ago" (μακρόθεν) by the time his father died (c. 1050?).

[28] See Kaldellis, *Mothers*, pp. 12–15.

[29] Psellus, *Chronography* VI.195–99.

Psellus seems to have expected monastic life to be both a safe refuge that would disarm critics of his orthodoxy and an opportunity to read and write without the distraction of official duties. Predictably, however, after a few months the thoroughly political and social Psellus found life as a monk on an isolated mountaintop more than a little dull. Early in 1055 Constantine IX died and was succeeded by the aged empress Theodora, who selected as her chief minister Leo Paraspondylus, whom Psellus considered a friend. He repeatedly tried to obtain a position at court from Paraspondylus, only to find the minister unfriendly to a possible rival whose orthodoxy might be questioned by the aggressive patriarch Michael Cerularius. Although Psellus made his way to court nonetheless, he never gained much influence over Theodora. He implies that he opposed her advisers' choice of her equally elderly successor, Michael VI, who after his accession in 1056 kept Paraspondylus in power.[30] Psellus spent much of his time trying to break the engagement of his adopted daughter to the young man he had chosen for her but had come to find thoroughly disreputable. The engagement was broken with the help of the empress Theodora, and Psellus soon married his daughter to a more suitable husband.[31] The new son-in-law was apparently a certain Basil Maleses, who with Psellus' assistance became the judge of the Armeniac Theme.[32]

After military rebels defeated Michael VI's army in 1057, the feeble emperor realized that he needed the help of experienced negotiators and chose Psellus and his friend Constantine Lichudes as envoys to the rebel leader, Isaac Comnenus. Isaac received them cordially and agreed to a settlement that awarded him the subordinate imperial title of Caesar and removed Paraspondylus from his ministry. This agreement had barely been ratified, however, when a coup in the capital overthrew Michael VI and proclaimed Isaac.[33] The new ruler professed his respect for Psellus, gave him the honorary title of president of the senate, and relied on his help in deposing the patriarch Michael Cerularius and replacing him with Constantine Lichudes. Yet Psellus never became a member of Isaac's inner circle.[34] When the emperor fell ill in 1059, Psellus admits that he knew Isaac would recover but let him think he was dying, even when Isaac decided to abdicate and become a monk. Although Psellus denied the accusation of Isaac's wife that he had plotted to remove her husband from power, he implies that he had an important part in arranging the succession of his friend Constantine Ducas as the next emperor.[35]

Constantine X Ducas had long been well disposed toward Psellus, who was on particularly good terms with the new emperor's brother, the Caesar John Ducas. While remaining a monk, Psellus became the emperor's trusted adviser. He also

[30] See especially Vries–van der Velden, "Amitiés," pp. 337–46, and M. Jeffreys, "Psellos," pp. 83–84, with Psellus, *Chronography* VIa.19–20, on the choice of Michael VI.

[31] Kaldellis, *Mothers*, pp. 14–15 and 139–46.

[32] See Vries–van der Velden, "Psellos et son gendre," especially pp. 120–31, a generally convincing example of historical detective work.

[33] See Vries–van der Velden, "Amitiés," pp. 346–48, and M. Jeffreys, "Psellos," pp. 78–81.

[34] See Kaldellis, *Argument*, pp. 167–78, and M. Jeffreys, "Psellos," pp. 78–81, who in my opinion is right to be more skeptical than Kaldellis about Psellus' closeness to Isaac.

[35] Psellus, *Chronography* VII.74–82 and 91.

became the tutor and apparently the godfather of the emperor's eldest son and heir, the future Michael VII, and taught Michael's younger brother Andronicus as well.[36] This was evidently the time when Psellus wrote his *Concise History* of the earlier Roman kings and emperors, which he addressed to young Michael. To continue the *Concise History*, Psellus also composed the main part of his *Chronography*, from Basil II's accession in 976 to Isaac I's abdication in 1059. He evidently completed it around 1062, before the patriarch Constantine Lichudes died, in August 1063, to be replaced the next year by another of Psellus' friends, John Xiphilinus.[37] Around the same time Psellus' adopted daughter gave birth to a son, whom Psellus cherished as his grandson and the empress Eudocia sponsored as her godson.[38] Psellus' son-in-law, Basil Maleses, was now the judge of the Theme of Hellas, a step down from his previous judgeship of the Armeniac Theme but still a prestigious post for a young man.[39]

Once again, however, Psellus' fortunes took a turn for the worse. A rival of his, the eunuch and imperial secretary Nicephoritzes, seems to have insinuated to the emperor that Psellus had committed adultery with the empress Eudocia. Although Constantine rejected this implausible charge and dismissed Nicephoritzes from court, the eunuch was then appointed duke of Antioch, which cannot be considered a sign of true disgrace.[40] The emperor seems not to have been much pleased with Psellus' *Chronography*, perhaps because of its propensity to judge emperors unfavorably and its failure to include a flattering account of Constantine's own reign. As the Uzes and Pechenegs raided the Balkans and the Seljuk Turks raided Anatolia, Psellus gave the emperor advice to increase military expenditures that was not only rejected but apparently resented.[41] Psellus ceased to be welcome at court and seems to have taken a position as the judge of the Bucellarian Theme, which amounted to a demotion.[42] Yet he retained his friendship with the empress Eudocia and with the Caesar John Ducas until Constantine X died, in 1067.

[36] On Psellus as tutor to Michael VII, see Zonaras XVIII.16.8–9, and as godfather, see Psellus, *Chronography* VIIb.4, where he describes himself as the spiritual brother of Michael's father (seemingly because both were "fathers" to Michael).

[37] Psellus, *Chronography* VII.67, refers to Lichudes in the present tense (ὁρῶ).

[38] See Kaldellis, *Mothers*, pp. 15–16 and 157–61. That Eudocia served as the child's godmother and the emperor himself offered to serve as godfather indicates that the birth occurred before Psellus fell out of favor at court.

[39] Vries–van der Velden, "Psellos et son gendre," pp. 131–35.

[40] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 180–81, referring to "Michael of Nicomedia," who was probably Psellus (see pp. 272–73 and n. 6 above) and observing that Nicephoritzes accused the empress of adultery out of "envy" for Michael.

[41] Cf. Psellus, *Chronography* VIIa.17–18 and 23.

[42] Though his career as a judge has usually been placed before Psellus became an imperial secretary under Michael IV, at that time Psellus was evidently pursuing his education and seems to have been too young and obscure for a judgeship, and after that time we are well informed of his activities until the middle of the reign of Constantine X. Riedinger, "Quatre étapes," pp. 5–30, argues persuasively that Psellus' post in the Bucellarians was his only judgeship and belongs to the latter period of Constantine X's reign, when Psellus' relations with the emperor became strained. (Cf. M. Jeffreys, "Psellos," pp. 81–83.)

The widowed empress Eudocia, designated by Constantine as regent for her underage son Michael VII, took Psellus as an adviser and ally. Yet she soon realized that she needed a capable husband to deal with the Turkish threat to Anatolia, even though she had sworn an oath to the dying Constantine not to remarry. She sent to Psellus to solicit his support, but he was uneasy at the prospect of her remarriage, which was likely to reduce the influence of his friend John Ducas and his pupil Michael VII. Most members of the court favored the remarriage, however, and the patriarch John Xiphilinus released Eudocia from her oath. The night before the wedding she gently but firmly informed Psellus of her decision to marry the general Romanus Diogenes and asked Psellus to help her break this unwelcome news to her son the emperor and her brother-in-law the Caesar. Having no real choice, Psellus accompanied her when she roused young Michael from his bed in the palace to meet his new stepfather.[43]

As emperor Romanus IV Diogenes seems always to have treated Psellus as a respected adviser, though he sometimes disregarded the strategic advice Psellus gave him, which came mostly from books. Psellus actually became closer to Romanus than to the empress Eudocia, who accused him of ingratitude. The emperor asked Psellus to accompany him on one of his campaigns against the Turks, in 1069, but the learned courtier found campaigning uncongenial and returned to the capital as soon as he decently could. Psellus' son-in-law, Basil Maleses, also gained the emperor's confidence and accompanied him on campaign. We have no reason to think that Psellus was involved in the treachery of the Ducas family at the battle of Manzikert, in 1071, when the Turks defeated and captured Romanus along with Basil Maleses.[44] Psellus does say, however, that he opposed restoring Romanus to the throne when the emperor returned from captivity. Though Psellus claims that what he really wanted was for Eudocia to rule alongside Michael VII, he apologetically defends the decisions Michael's advisers made to have Eudocia tonsured and Romanus blinded, and presumably Psellus agreed with them at the time.[45]

Michael VII officially became sole ruler in 1071, when he was around fifteen and far from precocious.[46] Psellus and the Caesar John Ducas must have expected

[43] Psellus, *Chronography* VIIb.5–9. Despite the doubts of Vries–van der Velden, "Psellos, Romain," p. 280 and n. 20, I see no reason to doubt Psellus' statement that he was not enthusiastic about Eudocia's remarriage, especially because he expected the *Chronography* to be read by Michael VII and others who presumably knew the truth.

[44] Like M. Jeffreys, "Psellos," pp. 86–87, I am not persuaded by the conjectures of Vries–van der Velden, "Psellos, Romain," pp. 294–308, that Psellus accompanied Romanus on the Manzikert campaign and systematically falsified his account of it. On the role of Basil Maleses, see Vries–van der Velden, "Psellos et son gendre," pp. 135–36.

[45] Psellus, *Chronography* VIIb.24, 27, 30–31, and 42.

[46] Though Psellus, *Chronography* VIIb.2, tries to emphasize Michael's maturity in 1067, cf. VIIb.24 (calling Michael a "child" [παιδὶ] in 1071) and VIIc.3 (noting that he was just growing his first beard in 1071), and Attaliates, *History*, p. 182 (calling Michael a "boy" [μειρακίσκον] in 1071). Since *Chronography* VIIa.20 states that Michael was the eldest of the three sons Constantine X had before his accession, in 1059, the earliest Michael could have been born is around 1056; but that birthdate is also almost the latest possible, since it would make him 15 in 1071, when he could still be called a "child" or "boy" but was beginning to grow a beard.

to dominate Michael, perhaps together with Archbishop John of Side, who served briefly as Michael's chief minister. Nicephoritzes, however, after being imprisoned under Eudocia and Romanus IV, returned to court, gained Michael's confidence, and was appointed postal logothete. Nicephoritzes replaced John of Side and gradually excluded John Ducas from power, though Psellus managed to cling to a precarious position as court orator and poet by flattering Michael shamelessly.[47] Such flattery is obvious in the supplement to the *Chronography* that Psellus composed in 1074.[48] When the Turks released Psellus' son-in-law, Basil Maleses, from captivity, the emperor, apparently considering Basil a partisan of Romanus IV, confiscated his property and separated him from his children. John Ducas befriended Maleses, who accompanied him on a campaign against some rebel mercenaries, but both of them were defeated and captured in 1074. After a bizarre sequence of events in which John was proclaimed emperor by the rebels, captured by the Turks, and finally ransomed and tonsured by Michael VII, Maleses was exiled. Psellus, himself insecure in the emperor's favor and disappointed in his disgraced son-in-law, seems not to have tried to help him.[49]

For the rest of Michael VII's reign Psellus' influence remained tenuous at best, and though he apparently managed to avoid outright exclusion from the imperial court he can hardly have been on friendly terms with the chief minister, Nicephoritzes. In 1078, after the loss of most of Anatolia to the Turks and the near-bankruptcy of the treasury, Michael was forced to abdicate in favor of Nicephorus Botaniates, who had Nicephoritzes tortured to death. Then Nicephorus III seems to have chosen Psellus himself as chief minister, presumably because he was competent, experienced, and an old rival of Nicephoritzes. Thus, at the age of sixty, in the midst of a desperate fiscal and military crisis, Psellus appears finally to have got his chance to head the government. He seems to have made himself unpopular by trying to restrain the emperor's penchant for giving lavish gifts, which the treasury could ill afford. No doubt he did appear "unpleasant and arrogant" to those he refused, like Michael Attaliates. In any case, Psellus died after no more than a few months in power.[50]

[47] On Nicephoritzes' rise under Michael, see Attaliates, *History*, pp. 181–83. On Psellus' position at Michael's court, see M. Jeffreys, "Psellos," pp. 88–89.

[48] Psellus, *Chronography* VIIc.12, describes Michael's son, Constantine, as a tiny infant. Zonaras XVIII.17.1 and 7 records that Constantine was born in the third year of Michael's reign, which began in October 1073, while Anna Comnena III.1.3 says that Constantine was not quite seven years old on April 4, 1081, so that he was born a little after April 4, 1074; his marriage contract with Robert Guiscard in Psellus, *Orationes*, no. 8, pp. 176–81 (p. 181: August of the 12th indiction, A.M. 6582, which is August 1074, not 1079 as the editor writes on p. 176), shows that Constantine was born before August 1074. Psellus' unqualified praise for John Ducas in *Chronography* VIIc.16–17 could hardly have been written after John was proclaimed emperor, in mid-1074. Though Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* III, p. 75, dates to 1075 the death of the Norman mercenary Robert Crépin (*PBW*, Robert 101) mentioned in *Chronography* VIIb.39, Gautier, *Nicéphore*, pp. 134 n. 2 and 148 n. 1, dates Robert's death more plausibly to 1073.

[49] Vries–van der Velden, "Psellos et son gendre," pp. 136–46.

[50] See Attaliates, *History*, pp. 296–97, referring to "Michael of Nicomedia"; on the identification with Psellus, see pp. 272–73 and n. 6 above.

Psellus had an extraordinary career, advising eight or nine rulers for some thirty-six years without ever wholly losing his influence. No contemporary courtier was as durable. Some Byzantines and moderns have blamed him for the disasters that the empire suffered at the time, and especially for his part in educating the incompetent Michael VII.[51] Yet Psellus never held anything like full power, at least until the very end of his life, and he sometimes tried to restrain the extravagance and improvidence of the rulers he advised. Michael VII's stupidity was probably beyond the ability of any teacher to redeem, especially a teacher who had to fear his pupil's displeasure. Psellus had something to do with replacing Michael VI with Isaac I, Isaac I with Constantine X, and Romanus IV with Michael VII; but the first change was an improvement, and each time Psellus was only one of many players. Though he was a superb courtier, an excellent teacher, and a competent adviser and official, he never acted as a general or emperor. Even if his grasp of strategy and finance was limited, he understood well enough that the Byzantine government had turned into a corrupt and mismanaged monster.[52] While his main priority was naturally to protect his own influence over the emperors, without it he could do nothing whatever. If he had pressed wise policies more insistently upon the mostly foolish rulers of his time, he would probably have been dismissed, as may have happened anyway when his advice displeased Constantine X.

Even if Psellus had not been constantly and deeply involved in politics, his literary production would be phenomenal. Although many of his writings have surely been lost, those that survive include 181 theological works, 171 philosophical works, 27 rhetorical and grammatical works, 98 orations, 124 poems, and 542 letters, plus medical, legal, military, agricultural, and geographical writings, to reach a grand total of 1,176 items.[53] If we also consider the demands made on his time by reading, teaching, and conversation, he must have composed most of his writings very rapidly, without much research or revision. As a government official and a wealthy man, he must often have dictated to a secretary to save time. He could of course have devoted extra time and care to any of his compositions that he considered the most important, but those probably did not include his historical works. In describing his interests in his eulogy for his mother, he gives a clear preference to theology and philosophy, prominent mention to rhetoric, music, logic, and the natural sciences, and a distinctly inferior place to "history and poetry," alongside medicine and geography.[54] We should, therefore, not necessarily expect this busy man to have spent a great deal of time and effort on researching and composing his two histories.

[51] *Scylitzes Continuatus*, p. 156.

[52] Psellus, *Chronography* VII.52–59.

[53] See Moore, *Iter*, especially p. 9.

[54] Psellus, *Eulogy* 27–30, mentioning history and poetry at 30a. Kaldellis, *Mothers*, p. 107 n. 218, adds the reasonable comment that when Psellus composed his *Eulogy* "we should keep in mind that he had not yet written the *Chronographia* or his more modest *Historia Syntomos*." On Psellus as a classical scholar, see Wilson, *Scholars*, pp. 156–79, who finds him superficial.

Psellus' *Concise History*

The *Concise History* is such a problematic work that its attribution to Psellus has been challenged, but ascribing it to someone else would create even more problems than accepting Psellus as its author.[55] Its full title is *Concise History of Those Who Ruled in the Older Rome and in Turn in the Newer One, Omitting Those Emperors Who Did Nothing Worth Mentioning, Beginning with Romulus*. Next comes the ascription: "The author of the *History* is the extremely famous *hypertimos* Psellus." The *Concise History* survives in a single manuscript and has only recently been published. In the manuscript the *Concise History* is followed by a page and a half left blank and then by the last few pages of Psellus' *Chronography*, beginning in the middle of a sentence. The final chapter of the *Concise History* and Book I of the *Chronography* both cover the reign of Basil II, and their two treatments of Basil's reign overlap considerably in content and even in wording. The *Concise History* covers the reigns of the Roman kings from Romulus to Tarquin the Proud and the first few consuls of the Roman Republic, then passes over the rest of the history of the Roman Republic until Julius Caesar, and finally discusses every emperor, even those who did nothing worth mentioning, up to Basil II, except for the apparently accidental omission of John I Tzimisces. The treatment of all the rulers is cursory and surprisingly inaccurate.

Apart from the explicit statement in our only manuscript that Psellus wrote the *Concise History*, we have the criticism in Scylitzes' preface of "our contemporary the Consul of the Philosophers and *hypertimos* Psellus"—among others—for laziness, inaccuracy, and "having made a mere inventory of the emperors and indicated who gained possession of the throne after whom, and nothing more."[56] These criticisms are not at all unreasonable if applied to the brief biographies of emperors in the *Concise History* but are clearly inapplicable to the lengthy and well-informed accounts of imperial reigns in the *Chronography*. Moreover, chapter fifteen of the *Concise History* includes the remark, "I shall treat [Roman imperial] history for you, taking my beginning from Julius Caesar, in order that you may be able to imitate some of the acts of the emperors and blame and abominate other acts."[57] These words, which appear too late in the text to be considered a nominal dedication, are evidently addressed to an emperor or an heir to the throne who was really expected to read the *Concise History*. The only writer of the time in a position to do anything of the sort was Psellus, tutor to the future Michael VII.

Moreover, the *Concise History* is written in Psellus' distinctive style. The minor stylistic differences between it and the *Chronography* are natural enough if we

[55] See Aerts, *Historia*, pp. ix–xxv (doubting Psellus' authorship), Reinsch, review of Aerts, *Historia Syntomos* (making significant corrections to Aerts' edition while also doubting Psellus' authorship), Ljubarskij, "Some Notes" and *Προσωπικότητα*, pp. 255–61 (defending Psellus' authorship), Duffy and Papaioannou, "Michael Psellus" (defending Psellus' authorship), and Farkas, "Literary Criticism" (affirming Psellus' authorship).

[56] Scylitzes, p. 3.17–23.

[57] Psellus, *Concise History* 15.

consider that the latter is a full-scale history and the former a brief manual, addressed to a young and none too intelligent pupil. The *Concise History* teems with unusual words and phrases that are typical of Psellus' works, some found only in them.[58] Although it understandably has shorter and less convoluted sentences than the *Chronography*, the *Concise History* is nonetheless a work in formal Byzantine literary prose, replete with rare words, Atticisms, and antiquarian affectations like the dual number.[59] Besides, the *Concise History* is written with a boundless, not to say overweening, self-confidence, characteristic of scarcely any contemporary Byzantine but Psellus. For example, only Psellus would have been likely to pronounce Proclus "the great philosopher, whom indeed I rank next after Plato," or to rely on his memory to date Proclus somewhat too late, under Anastasius I.[60] Similarly, the *Concise History* includes rather condescending critiques of the writings of the scholar-emperors Leo VI and Constantine VII.[61] This same self-assurance evidently caused the defects that have made several modern scholars reluctant to accept Psellus' authorship.

The *Concise History* is riddled with the casual errors of a writer who feared no criticism.[62] It calls the Roman king Servius Tullius "Stullius," says that Augustus' original name was "Sextilius" (Sextilis was the original name of the month renamed August in his honor), turns the Jewish king Herod Agrippa I into two kings named "Agrippa and Herod," refers to the emperor Nerva as "Gerva," and calls the emperor Carus "Marus."[63] Later the author states that Constantius II's cousin Gallus and Valentinian I's brother Valens ruled the western part of the empire (both ruled in the East), Theodosius I came from "Spain, the most powerful city [*sic*] of Western Iberia," the emperor Zeno was the son of Leo I (Zeno was Leo's son-in-law), and the emperor Heraclonas had his tongue cut off and his mother, Martina, her nose.[64] (He lost his nose, and she her tongue.) Still later, the historian names Leo the Philosopher as the tutor of Leo VI (Leo's tutor was Photius), declares that Constantine VII reigned with his mother after the deposition of Romanus I (when she was probably long dead), and specifies that when Romanus II died, in 963, he was forty, while his son Basil II was twenty.[65] (Romanus was actually twenty-four, while Basil was only four.) The history contains many other

58 See Duffy and Papaioannou, "Michael Psellus," pp. 223–27.

59 See the *Index Graecitatis* in Aerts, *Historia*, pp. 188–206 (listing uses of the dual on p. 193).

60 Psellus, *Concise History* 69. Proclus actually died in 485, six years before Anastasius' accession.

61 Psellus, *Concise History* 101 (Leo VI) and 103 (Constantine VII).

62 Aerts, *Historia*, pp. xiii–xv. To Aerts' additional argument that the *Concise History* must be much later than Psellus because it shows parallels with the history of Zonaras, the obvious rejoinder is that Zonaras used the *Concise History* rather than the other way around; see below, p. 396 and n. 38.

63 Psellus, *Concise History* 5 and 11.17 ("Stullius"), 17 ("Sextilius"), 20 ("Agrippa and Herod"), 28 ("Gerva," 3 times), and 53 ("Marus").

64 Psellus, *Concise History* 56 (Gallus), 59 (Valens), 62 (Spain, "Eastern Iberia" being the later Georgia), 66 (Zeno), and 78 (Heraclonas and Martina).

65 Psellus, *Concise History* 100 (Leo the Philosopher), 102 (Constantine VII), 103 (Romanus II), and 104 (Basil II); for Basil II's age, see above, p. 234 and n. 35.

statements unattested elsewhere, ranging from the impossible to the improbable, that are too explicit and pervasive to blame on copyists or sources.

Nonetheless, these mistakes are no worse than some that appear in popular histories and textbooks today—even those by professional scholars who write too quickly and rely too much on their memories, confident that their readers are too ignorant, indifferent, or stupid to notice any lapses. In the case of the *Concise History*, the young and dim-witted Michael VII was scarcely likely to criticize his tutor. Although Psellus may well have expected others to read his *Concise History*, he probably thought no real scholar would bother with such a short account of such a long period, while ordinary readers would simply accept the authority of the "extremely famous" Psellus. His errors are factually wrong but not intrinsically absurd, of the sort that anyone might make who recalled what he had read years earlier without checking the facts. Obviously Psellus overrated his memory, because he can hardly have realized how many serious mistakes he had made. The much less learned Scylitzes could justifiably comment that in the *Concise History* Psellus showed himself one of those historians who, "applying themselves to their task inattentively, have fallen short of accuracy."[66]

A striking feature of the *Concise History* is its large number of direct quotations, especially alleged sayings of the emperors from Titus to Theophilus. A few of these are loosely based on earlier sources.[67] The majority are quite unparalleled, however, except in Byzantine texts that evidently drew on the *Concise History* itself. Most of these sayings are attributed to emperors from the poorly attested third, fifth, seventh, and eighth centuries, including emperors whose names Psellus misspells.[68] While most of the maxims of the bad or obscure emperors are silly or commonplace, others look like the opinions of Psellus himself. For instance, Heraclius, who receives generally favorable treatment, is quoted as ardently praising both philosophy and astronomy, both interests of Psellus not otherwise known to have been shared by that military emperor.[69] We have no evidence of any previous anthology of such quotations, for which few if any authentic sources were available; nor is Psellus, in view of the many errors he made in the *Concise History*, likely to have done extensive research on such sayings. He seems simply to have made most of them up in order to make his biographies more interesting and instructive. While invented speeches had of course been characteristic of classical and classicizing histories since Herodotus and Thucydides, most historians tried to make their speeches fit the original situations as well as possible.

[66] Scylitzes, p. 3.17–20.

[67] Psellus, *Concise History* 26 (Titus), 55 (Julian), 92 (Nicephorus I), and 97 (Theophilus), with Symeon I.59.3 (Titus), 91.1 (Julian, recorded under Jovian), and 130.2 (Theophilus); cf. Theophanes A.M. 6303, pp. 489.28–490.2 (Nicephorus I).

[68] Psellus, *Concise History* 37 (Antoninus = Caracalla), 48 (Claudius II), 49 (Aurelian), 50 ("Quintilius" = Quintillus), 51 (Tacitus), 52 (Probus), 53 ("Marus" = Carus), 63 (Arcadius), 64 (Theodosius II), 65 (Marcian), 66 (Leo I), 67 (Leo II), 69 (Anastasius I), 75 (Phocas), 76 (Heraclius), 79 (Constans II), 80 (Constantine IV), 81 (Justinian II), 82 (Leontius), and 85 (Philippicus).

[69] Psellus, *Concise History* 76, p. 66.78–81.

Inventing short quotations without evidence was not customary and by classical or Byzantine standards of accuracy was quite dubious.

Psellus' carelessness and inventiveness complicate the task of identifying the sources of the *Concise History*, since sometimes we cannot be sure whether he invented an unparalleled report or copied or miscopied it from somewhere else. He could mean any of several sources when he cites "one of the historians" who wrote (correctly) that Valerian (253–60) was defeated and killed by the Persians and survived by his son Gallienus (253–68).[70] In the previous sentence, however, Psellus writes that both emperors reigned fifteen years together before being assassinated, a statement that is both unparalleled and certainly wrong. Though Psellus says that according to "one of those who have told of the emperors in their histories" Heraclius' son Constantine III (641) rejected Monotheletism, that report too is unparalleled in our few sources for the period.[71] Later Psellus cites "one of the historians" for the information that in 963 the empress Theophano wanted to make John Tzimisces emperor. Here Psellus may have misremembered a report by Leo the Deacon attributing such a plan to Joseph Bringas.[72] In discussing Nicephorus II, Psellus remarks, "many in his time and soon afterward have published detailed histories," possibly alluding to Leo the Deacon, Nicephorus the Deacon, and Theodore of Side.[73] All these references are so vague that they could simply have been added from memory.

The main source of the *Concise History* was evidently the chronicle of Symeon the Logothete, from which Psellus copied a few quotations and mistakes.[74] For early Roman history, he apparently consulted Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Roman Antiquities*, though not carefully enough to avoid calling Servius Tullius "Stullius." (Perhaps Psellus worked from brief notes he had taken on the *Roman Antiquities*, and misread his abbreviation "S. Tullius" as "Stullius.") Taking his basic information from Symeon and Dionysius, and perhaps from some other source now lost, Psellus added material that he remembered or misremembered from his past reading or that he merely made up. His past reading may well have included the histories of George Syncellus, Theophanes, Leo the Deacon, Nicephorus the Deacon, Theodore of Side, and perhaps Plutarch and Dio Cassius. Yet Psellus seems not to

70 Psellus, *Concise History* 47; the unnamed source could be Symeon I, 80.

71 Psellus, *Concise History* 77, p. 66.86–87.

72 Psellus, *Concise History* 104, p. 98.69–70; cf. Leo the Deacon, *History* III.2–3.

73 Psellus, *Concise History* 105, p. 98.82–84.

74 The sources are discussed in Aerts, *Historia*, pp. xxiii–xxv, and Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα*, pp. 259–61. The evidence for Aerts' belief that Psellus used George the Monk's chronicle is weak. Note that the chronicle that Aerts, *Historia*, p. xxiv (and later in his apparatus), calls "Ecl[oge] Hist[oriarum]," published by Cramer, *Anecdota* II, pp. 243–379, from *Parisinus graecus* 854, is simply the first edition of Symeon's chronicle; cf. Wahlgren, *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon* I, pp. 36*–37*. For a quotation from Symeon, cf. Psellus, *Concise History* 70.62–63, with Symeon I, 103.11. For an error copied from Symeon, see Aerts, *Historia*, p. xv, referring to Psellus, *Concise History* 18.1, and Symeon I, 51.4, though the passage in question has, presumably wrongly, been printed not in Wahlgren's text of Symeon but only in his apparatus. Wahlgren has unfortunately failed to exploit Psellus' *Concise History* as a witness to Symeon's text.

have consulted copies of their works or even detailed notes on them while composing the *Concise History*.

Psellus also added his own judgments on emperors and events, mostly following pro-senatorial writers like Plutarch and Dio. For a subject of an autocracy, Psellus goes out of his way to praise the "most admirable Brutus" and the other "most noble men" who overthrew the "tyranny" of Tarquin the Proud and established the Roman Republic.[75] Psellus even praises Julius Caesar's assassins Brutus and Cassius as "noble men and supporters of the aristocracy," stating as a fact that Brutus was Caesar's illegitimate son, apparently not remembering that Plutarch mentions this only as a possibility.[76] Psellus shows some sympathy for the emperor Tiberius, adopting from Symeon the story that Tiberius executed Pilate for crucifying Christ; but Psellus condemns Caligula, Nero, Commodus, and Elagabalus more harshly than Symeon does, and approves of Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius more enthusiastically.[77] Yet sometimes Psellus' judgments seem merely whimsical. Unlike other historians, he praises the obscure emperor Quintillus (270), about whom he knew so little that he calls him "Quintilius" and dates him not before but after Aurelian (270–75).[78]

The *Concise History* is such a slipshod work as to be of questionable value even as evidence of Psellus' historical opinions. It does show a certain sentimental attachment to the Roman Republic, which was, however, not strong enough to lead the author to include serious treatment of Roman Republican history. Psellus naturally implies that certain qualities of earlier emperors are to be avoided and others to be imitated, but these virtues and vices are conspicuous by their banality: justice and orthodoxy are good, and cruelty and licentiousness are bad. Scarcely any of the maxims attributed to the emperors are memorable. Aurelian is made to say that an emperor needs many eyes and many ears, and Justinian II to remark, on regaining his throne after being deposed and mutilated, "Truly the sun comes after a cloud."[79] Emperors receive only perfunctory credit for their military victories and are sometimes praised for being well educated. Yet learned emperors are also criticized: Leo VI for alleged superstition and his fourth marriage, and Constantine VII, apparently without evidence, for pederasty and irascibility.[80] No overall historical themes emerge clearly from Psellus' disjointed entries.

Psellus' carelessness also affected the style and composition of the *Concise History*, which he appears to have dictated without revising it afterwards with any care. Although puzzled copyists may be partly responsible for the garbled state of

75 Psellus, *Concise History* 7–8.

76 Psellus, *Concise History* 16; cf. Plutarch, *Brutus* 5.2.

77 Cf. Psellus, *Concise History* 18 (Tiberius), 19 (Caligula), 21 (Nero), 29–32 (Trajan–Marcus), 33 (Commodus), and 39 (Avitus = Elagabalus), with Symeon I, 51 (Tiberius), 52 (Caligula), 54 (Nero), 62–65 (Trajan–Marcus), 66 (Commodus), and 72 (Avitus = Elagabalus).

78 Psellus, *Concise History* 50 ("Quintilius"). Neither error appears in Symeon I, 81.3, in the apparatus, a passage that again should presumably be printed in Symeon's text. (Cf. p. 285 n. 74 above.)

79 Psellus, *Concise History* 49 (Aurelian) and 81 (Justinian II).

80 Psellus, *Concise History* 100 (Leo VI) and 102 (Constantine VII).

our text, much of its incoherence must go back to Psellus and his secretary. Several minor repetitions were evidently meant as revisions by the author but appear alongside versions that should have been deleted.[81] Our text is full of incoherent passages that the editor has often desperately tried to emend, most of which probably resulted from Psellus' dictating without revising.[82] Our text also includes several passages that seem to be out of order, as if Psellus had meant to insert them elsewhere but never did.[83] The most obvious of these is the chapter on Heraclius' son Constantine III (641), which appears ten chapters later than its chronological place, after the chapter on Anastasius II (713–15).[84] At first Psellus seems to have deliberately omitted a chapter on Constantine III, because his chapter on Heraclius (610–41) says Heraclius made Heraclonas his heir and disinherited his other sons, and the chapter on Heraclonas (641) says that Constantine III was murdered to make way for Heraclonas. Later Psellus apparently realized that Constantine had indeed ruled, albeit briefly, and added a chapter on him with a duplicate reference to his murder. Yet if Psellus' secretary marked where this chapter was supposed to go, a later copyist failed to understand the marks.

The last chapter of the *Concise History* is also problematic. In the next to last chapter, on Nicephorus II (963–69), Psellus mentions John Tzimisces, adding, "but let Tzimisces await his own chapter."[85] The next chapter, however, proceeds directly to the reign of Basil II (976–1025), leaving a gap of six years and no treatment of Tzimisces' reign (969–76). Finally, the chapter on the reign of Basil II, which is about half as long as the preceding chapter on the much shorter reign of Nicephorus II, breaks off abruptly. Moreover, Psellus' *Chronography* begins with the words, "Thus the emperor John Tzimisces, having been responsible for many benefits to the Roman empire and having increased its power, loses his life in this way."[86] Although some modern scholars think that this is a reference to

[81] Psellus, *Concise History* 33.68 (ἀκόλαστος ἤτοι ἀκρόχολος, as if Psellus, realizing he had already written ἀκόλαστος in line 67, meant to replace it with ἀκρόχολος), 50.59 (τῆς ἐξ αὐτῆς ἡμέρας, as if Psellus' original version was τῆς ἡμέρας and his revision was ἐξ αὐτῆς ἡμέρας), 58.32 (μετὰ τοῦ καὶ τοῦ παιδὸς, as if his original version was μετὰ τοῦ παιδὸς and his revision μετὰ καὶ τοῦ παιδὸς), 67.16 (ταῖς ἐν χερσὶν, as if his original version was ταῖς χερσὶν and his revision ἐν χερσὶν), 105.83 (οὐ μετ' οὐ πολὺ ὕστερον, as if his original version was οὐ πολὺ ὕστερον and his revision μετ' οὐ πολὺ ὕστερον), and 102.39–40 (ἐν αὐτῷ ἐν ἀπορρήτῳ, as if his original version was ἐν ἀπορρήτῳ and his revision αὐτῷ ἐν ἀπορρήτῳ). These may be revisions Psellus made while he was dictating.

[82] See the commentary in Aerts, *Historia* (who refers to the text not by the chapter numbers, as I do, but by his page and line numbers, designated here by quotation marks), pp. 114 (on "12.83"), 117–18 (on "14.38–42"), 118–19 (on "16.65"), 125 (on "26.62–65"), 127 (on "30.35"), 135–36 (on "44.85"), 139 (on "52.33–35"), 151 (on "76.58"), 158–59 (on "88.7"), 160 (on "90.25–27"), 166 (on "100.9–12"), 166–67 (on "100.15"), 168 (on "102.55–56"), 169 (on "104.78–79"), and 171 (on "108.47–48").

[83] Psellus, *Concise History* 62.21–22, 74.64–76, and 89.52.

[84] Cf. Psellus, *Concise History* 77.82 (apparatus) and 86.7 (apparatus), and Aerts, *Historia*, pp. xx–xxi. Note that Aerts has transferred this chapter to its "correct" place in the text.

[85] Psellus, *Concise History* 105.4–5.

[86] Psellus, *Chronography* I.1.

the *History* of Leo the Deacon, which concludes with John's death and precedes Psellus' *Chronography* in our principal manuscript, for Psellus to allude to the work of another writer in such an offhand manner would be very odd. The reference can be much more plausibly assigned to the *Concise History*, which like the first sentence of the *Chronography* often uses the historical present for the past tense.[87] Yet in its present form the *Concise History* ends in the middle of Basil II's reign, without mentioning the death of Tzimisces at all. A chapter on Tzimisces' reign has evidently been lost, though no other chapter seems to be missing from our text.

The likely explanation is that, as elsewhere in the *Concise History*, Psellus was misunderstood by his secretary and never noticed the secretary's mistake. Apparently Psellus did compose a chapter on John Tzimisces for the *Concise History* but left its chapter on Basil II unfinished after deciding to begin the *Chronography* with a more detailed chapter on Basil. Therefore Psellus told his secretary to delete the last, unfinished chapter on Basil from the *Concise History*, so that it would conclude with 976, where the *Chronography* begins. Misunderstanding which chapter to delete, the secretary deleted the last complete chapter, that on John, and retained the chapter on Basil, which Psellus had meant to replace with Book I of the *Chronography*. Psellus may actually have intended for the whole *Concise History* to take the place of the formal preface that the *Chronography* lacks. (Perhaps Psellus thought the *Concise History* was too rudimentary a work to need a preface of its own.) In any case, even though the *Concise History* and the *Chronography* are quite different sorts of history, the latter is a sort of continuation of the former and was presumably begun soon after the former was finished. If we allow a little time for the *Chronography* to be completed around 1062—the *Concise History* cannot have taken long to write—we may date the *Concise History* around 1061.[88]

Psellus' *Concise History* is a peculiar work, a grossly inaccurate and even partly fictional history by an extremely well-educated and intelligent man. Since it was probably commissioned by Constantine X as a schoolbook for his son Michael, Psellus may have decided to write it quickly in order to dispose of an unwelcome assignment. Even if he had had little enthusiasm for undertaking it, however, the *Concise History* seems to have begun to give Psellus a taste for historiography. He obviously enjoyed the historian's prerogative of sitting in judgment on past rulers and analyzing their merits, faults, and foibles as if he were their superior. Once Psellus reached the emperors who had reigned during his own lifetime, he could dispense with reading the works of other historians, in which he had only a

[87] So Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα*, p. 257. Note that in this MS, *Parisinus graecus* 1712, Leo the Deacon's history is preceded by the chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon, which Leo certainly did not continue, because the two works both include the reign of Romanus II (959–61) and are very different in character. The MS seems simply to be the result of someone's collecting histories so as to provide a more or less continuous narrative beginning with the Creation. For the historical present, see, e.g., Psellus, *Concise History* 105 (on Nicephorus II, where it appears frequently throughout) and 106.32 (διολισθαίνει), and for Psellus' use of it in the *Chronography*, see Renauld, *Étude*, pp. 96 and 97.

[88] For the date of the *Chronography*, see above, p. 278 and n. 37.

limited interest, and rely on his own memory, which he valued highly. Fortunately for Psellus, his reputation as an historian rests primarily on his *Chronography*, a much better, livelier, longer, and more careful work than the *Concise History*.

Psellus' *Chronography*

In writing his *Chronography* Psellus enjoyed several great advantages.[89] Its subject was the critical period from 976 to 1074, when Byzantium declined from dominance over all its neighbors to being forced to fight once more for its very existence. Of the fourteen emperors and empresses who ruled during these years, Psellus lived under all fourteen, met all but two, served all but three, and was well acquainted with all but five. He had enough material to depict all of them in some depth, if he added to his own memories whatever his many friends and acquaintances at court could tell him. For example, we know that the emperor Isaac I regaled Psellus with stories about Basil II, whom Isaac had known well in his youth.[90] Psellus understood the workings of the Byzantine government from long experience, knew enough past history to put current events in perspective, and was an accomplished and skillful writer. When he composed the first part of the *Chronography*, around 1062, he could write candidly about practically all the rulers he depicted, except for the current emperor, Constantine X, who had taken power just at the end of Psellus' account, in 1059. By then, and still more when the historian wrote a supplement to his *Chronography*, in 1074, Psellus had seen enough to perceive the main developments of the period, though he could hardly be impartial about the reigning emperor, Michael VII, and was under some constraint in writing about Michael's parents, Constantine X and Eudocia.

Like the *Concise History*, the *Chronography* has no formal preface, but a formal title almost as long as a preface: *Chronography Composed by the Very Learned Monk Michael the* Hypertimos, *Recording the Deeds of the Emperors Basil* [II] *and Constantine* [VIII] *the Porphyrogeniti, after Them Romanus* [III] *the Son of Argyrus, after Him Michael* [IV] *the Paphlagonian, after Him His Nephew Michael* [V] *the Former Caesar, Then the Two Sisters the Lady Zoë and the Lady Theodora the Porphyrogenitae, with Them Constantine* [IX] *Monomachus, Then the Lady Theodora (the Second of the Two Sisters) Ruling by Herself, after Her Michael* [VI] *the Aged, after Him Isaac* [I] *Comnenus, and Then Until the Proclamation of Constantine* [X] *Ducas*.[91] Perhaps inadvertently,

[89] On the *Chronography*, see Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα*, pp. 255–348, Kaldellis, *Argument*, Pietsch, *Chronographia*, and Impellizzeri, *Michele Psello* I, pp. xiv–xliii (the introduction by Dario Del Corno) and 337–403, and II, pp. 395–463 (the commentary by Ugo Criscuolo). On the text, see Riedinger, "Remarques (1–3)," suggesting many emendations.

[90] Psellus, *Chronography* VII.76; cf. Bryennius I.1 on Basil's guardianship over Isaac and his brother.

[91] Although Impellizzeri, the most recent editor, doubts that this title was composed by Psellus, it certainly sounds like his work, and if someone had added it later he would surely have updated it to include the material in Psellus' second part. Impellizzeri also omits Sathas' conjectural addition of the words τοῦ μετ' ἐκείνην Μιχαὴλ τοῦ γέροντος in line 10, but this conjecture is practically certain, since in that line the masculine ἐκεῖνον cannot

Psellus seems to have left this title unrevised when he added the second part of the *Chronography* on the reigns of Constantine X, Eudocia, Romanus IV, and Michael VII. The historian himself confirms that he originally concluded the *Chronography* with the abdication of Isaac, in 1059.[92]

Although the *Chronography* lacks a proper preface, a sort of delayed preface appears about halfway through the work, just before its account of the reign of Constantine IX. There Psellus declares, "Many men have many times pressed this composition upon me, not only those in office and the first men of the senate, but also others who celebrate the mysteries of the Word and are very godly and quite perfect in their souls"—that is, officials, dignitaries, clergy, and monks. Like most historians, Psellus notes the danger that important events will be forgotten if they pass unrecorded by contemporaries and says he was nonetheless reluctant to undertake his task. Then the reader expects Psellus, like previous historians, to express his fear that doing justice to such a great subject would be beyond his abilities; but Psellus says nothing so modest. His fears are different: that in describing those who had been generous to him he might either praise them too much and write fiction, or criticize them too much and be thought ungrateful. Invoking, however, the historian's painful duty to tell the truth, he begins a thoroughly damning portrait of his dead patron Constantine IX, while addressing him as "most divine soul" to beg his forgiveness. Obviously Psellus was trying to disarm readers who might consider him an ingrate or a hypocrite, especially because, as he acknowledges, he had written several panegyrics of Constantine during the emperor's reign.[93]

After further remarks on Constantine's character, Psellus' own education, and Constantine's private life, Psellus continues the sort of explanation usually found in prefaces. He excuses himself from giving too many details, especially of military history, because "you, dearest of all men, asked me not for a relatively ambitious history but for a relatively summary one." Among several possibilities, this person who requested the *Chronography* from Psellus seems most likely to be the reigning emperor, Constantine X Ducas, who had been Psellus' friend before his accession.[94] As a continuation of the *Concise History*, which Constantine had apparently commissioned for his son, the *Chronography* could hardly have been dedicated to a commoner without risking some offense to the emperor. Moreover, the other possible candidates to be this "dearest of all men"—Psellus' closest friends, John Xiphilinus, John Mauropus, and Constantine Lichudes—would have been among the officials, dignitaries, clergy, and monks who had asked Psellus for a contemporary history earlier without success. The emperor would have been much harder to refuse. Finally,

refer to Theodora. The absence of a regular preface for the *Chronography* is discussed by Grigoriadis, "Study," pp. 327–31.

92 Psellus, *Chronography* VII.51.

93 Psellus, *Chronography* VI.22–28.

94 Cf. Psellus, *Chronography* VI.73 (φίλτατε πάντων ἀνδρῶν), with VIIa.72 for Psellus' earlier friendship with Ducas. Ljubarskij, *Προσωπικότητα*, p. 263, considers possible identifications of this dedicatee.

a request to keep a contemporary history short would have been much less likely to come from Psellus' intellectual friends, who would presumably have welcomed more detailed treatment, than from the much less scholarly Constantine X.

Psellus also cites his unnamed friend's request as his reason for not arranging the *Chronography* "by Olympiads of years" (apparently last used in 630 in the "Paschal Chronicle") or "by the seasons of the year as the historian [Thucydides] has done."[95] Instead Psellus says he has "simply dictated the most important events of the history and as many as were gathered in my memory as I composed the history." He has therefore taken "the middle road" between the excessive length "of the antiquarians of the reigns and events of the older Rome" and the excessive concision "of those who make a practice of composing chronographies in our own times."[96] These "antiquarians" of "the older Rome" (as opposed to Byzantium, the New Rome) presumably included Polybius, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Cassius Dio, whose histories were certainly lengthy, while the contemporary Byzantine chroniclers probably included Theodore of Sebastea, Demetrius of Cyzicus, and John the Monk, whose chronicles appear to have been short.[97] Psellus seems to have distinguished such recent chronographers from earlier "antiquarian historians" whom he mentions as sources for Basil II's dissipated adolescence, perhaps meaning Nicephorus the Deacon, Leo the Deacon, and Theodore of Side.[98] Oddly, Psellus called his own history a "chronography," like the recent works that he considered superficial.

Following the ancient practice revived by some Byzantine historians, Psellus divides his *Chronography* into numbered books. Of its seven books, the first four are short and cover one emperor each: Basil II, Constantine VIII, Romanus III, and Michael IV. The fifth book, also short, combines the brief reign of Michael V with the even briefer reign of Theodora until she agreed to share the throne with Zoë. The sixth book, the longest, combines the short reign of Zoë with Theodora, the much longer reign of Constantine IX with Zoë, and the short second reign of Theodora alone. The seventh book originally included only the short reigns of Michael VI and Isaac I. However, since Psellus seems not to have assigned a book number to the supplement that he later wrote on the reigns of Constantine X, Eudocia, Romanus IV, and Michael VII, the supplement can be considered part of the seventh book, which accordingly covers seven reigns that had little in common with one another.[99] In something of an innovation, Psellus subdivides

[95] On the "Paschal Chronicle," see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 340–48.

[96] Psellus, *Chronography* VI.73.

[97] The latter may possibly be the "writers" (ὑπογράφων, genitive plural) cited by Psellus, *Chronography* II.2, as sources for Constantine VIII's character.

[98] Psellus, *Chronography* I.4. Admittedly, Leo the Deacon says nothing of the kind about Basil, and Theodore of Side, writing under Basil himself, would have been unlikely to describe his misspent youth either, though Nicephorus the Deacon, writing under John I, may perhaps have done so. In any case, here Psellus is probably relying on his memory of what he had read, which as we can see from his *Concise History* was not very reliable.

[99] For convenience, Impellizzeri and others refer to the parts of the last two books as VI (on Constantine IX), VIa (on Theodora), VII (on Michael VI and Isaac I), VIIa (on Constantine X),

his books with subheadings, like "On the Revolt of Sclerus" or "On the Personal Characteristics of the Empress Zoë."[100] The real divisions of the *Chronography* are in any case the reigns of the emperors and empresses, each of which brought significant changes from the previous reign.

As we have seen, the opening of the *Chronography* is very casual: "Thus the emperor John Tzimisces, having been responsible for many benefits to the Roman empire and having increased its power, loses his life in this way; and imperial power devolves upon both Basil and Constantine, the sons of Romanus." Yet in the next sentence Psellus shifts from the present to the past (in this case, imperfect) tense, and, as if to reassure us that we are reading formal Atticizing prose, begins to refer to Basil II and Constantine VIII in the archaic dual number. Psellus holds our interest with brief character sketches of the two inexperienced young emperors and their adviser and uncle (actually great-uncle) the eunuch Basil Lecapenus. Psellus depicts Constantine as generously (if passively) deferring to his brother, and the eunuch as a shrewd and loyal chief minister. Basil II is said to have been transformed from an easygoing young playboy into an irascible and ruthless but serious and dedicated ruler as he fought the dangerous rebels Bardas Sclerus and Bardas Phocas. Psellus devotes most of his account of Basil's reign to their revolts and to Basil Lecapenus' dismissal from power, apparently because those events affected the emperor's character more than his triumphs over the Bulgarians, Arabs, and Armenians, which most historians consider more important. Psellus concludes with a more detailed description of Basil II as he was in old age, after a long reign of momentous victories.

Proceeding to the short reign of Constantine VIII alone, Psellus depicts him as an indolent sybarite dependent on court eunuchs, who was indulgent to foreign enemies but cruel to domestic conspirators. The question of the succession introduces Constantine's three daughters, especially Zoë, the second and most beautiful, whom the dying emperor married to Romanus Argyrus after sending Romanus' first wife to a convent. Psellus describes Romanus III as a capricious and deluded mediocrity. He had believed that he would found a new dynasty but discovered that Zoë was too old to have children. He had also believed that he would make great conquests, but his blundering expedition against Arab Aleppo was a fiasco. Romanus then devoted himself to building a magnificent monastery. After he gave up marital relations with Zoë, she began an affair with Michael the Paphlagonian, the handsome brother of Romanus' powerful minister, the eunuch John the Orphanotrophus. John, Michael, and Zoë conspired to poison Romanus gradually and finally to have him drowned in his bath.

Without approving of this murder, or of Zoë's hastily marrying and crowning Michael IV, Psellus expresses a surprisingly favorable opinion of the new emperor, saying that after this unpromising beginning he rose to the demands of his office.

VIIb (on Eudocia and Romanus IV), and VIIc (on Michael VII), and I follow their example here.

[100] Psellus, *Chronography* I.5 and VI.157. Unlike Impellizzeri, I see no reason to doubt that these subheadings are Psellus' own.

Psellus admits, however, that Michael was ungrateful to Zoë and left much of the work of routine administration to his brother, John, who according to Psellus was supremely intelligent and loyal to his family but thoroughly depraved. Since Michael was an epileptic and in poor health, John persuaded him to name as his Caesar and adopted son their nephew, another Michael, whom Psellus considered a deceitful and vindictive upstart. The historian nevertheless admired Michael IV's piety and charities, and gave him credit for ending the Bulgarian rebellion, though it collapsed only when its leader, Alusian, betrayed it by deserting to Michael. Soon afterward Michael fell mortally ill and became a monk on the day of his death, an act Psellus praises, declaring that the emperor had unquestionably attained salvation.

Psellus criticizes Michael V for courting the favor of the lower classes in Constantinople and for ingratitude when he exiled first his uncle John and then his adoptive mother, Zoë, the two allies to whom he owed his throne. Zoë's exile set off a popular uprising in the capital, of which Psellus gives a gripping eyewitness account up to the mob's blinding Michael and proclaiming Theodora and Zoë joint rulers. Psellus compares the characters of the two sisters, observing that Zoë was the less garrulous, the more emotional, and extravagantly generous, while Theodora was the more talkative, serious, and parsimonious, and neither had the qualities of a good ruler. The historian rather improbably suggests that Zoë's lavish spending during their shared rule of less than two months began the crisis of the empire that was evident when he wrote around 1062.[101] In any case, according to Psellus the courtiers decided that Zoë had to remarry in order to give the empire an emperor. After one candidate spoke too frankly and another suddenly died, the courtiers and the empress settled on Constantine Monomachus. Psellus implicitly criticizes the patriarch Alexius of Studius for allowing Zoë to make a third marriage at all.[102]

Psellus opens his account of Constantine IX's reign with the extended remarks that serve as a delayed preface to the *Chronography*, explaining that, after reluctantly agreeing to write a history of his own times, he must sometimes criticize his patron, Constantine, in the interest of truth. Then, beginning with the words "This man, when he took power, managed affairs neither conscientiously nor prudently," Psellus condemns Constantine's excessive spending and indiscriminate distribution of official titles.[103] He nonetheless depicts him as modest, charming, and highly appreciative of scholars and orators, and of Psellus in particular. The historian takes this opportunity to add a long digression on his own education up to the time when he won Constantine's favor. Then Psellus describes how Constantine, Zoë, and Theodora regarded their imperial power not as a responsibility to their subjects but as a source of pleasure and ease, which Constantine pursued by bringing his mistress Scleraena into the palace and Zoë by concocting

[101] Psellus, *Chronography* VI.7–9; at VI.21 he says that their joint reign had begun its third month, but it actually lasted from April 20 to June 11 of 1042.

[102] Psellus, *Chronography* VI.20.

[103] Psellus, *Chronography* VI.29.

perfumes. Psellus, however, professes to admire Zoë's extravagant devotion to an icon of Christ.

After promising to be brief, as requested by that "dearest of all men," who was probably Constantine X, Psellus begins his account of Constantine IX's wars with the revolt of the general George Maniaces. Although most Byzantine historians had scant sympathy for unsuccessful rebels, Psellus sees Maniaces as a military genius who had been badly treated by Michael V and Constantine IX and was well on his way to winning the throne when he was mortally wounded in battle. Psellus also blames Constantine IX for not anticipating a Russian raid and the revolt of another general, Leo Tornices, both of which Psellus describes in some detail. Then, turning to domestic affairs, the historian writes of the emperor's worsening case of gout, his indulgence of the rascally Romanus Boïlas, his taking of a new mistress, his dismissal of Constantine Lichudes as chief minister, and his construction of an expensive new church. Psellus ends the account of the reign by mentioning his own retirement to a monastery in alarm at the emperor's inconstancy, not long before Constantine died and Theodora succeeded him.

Psellus' judgment on Theodora's brief reign by herself is somewhat equivocal. He describes it as peaceful and prosperous, claims that she recalled him from his monastery and solicited his advice, and blames her advisers for whatever went wrong, including the unfortunate choice of her successor, Michael VI. Psellus sees Michael as weak and ill advised, at once too solicitous of his civil officials and not solicitous enough of his generals. According to Psellus, Michael positively provoked the revolt of the generals under Isaac Comnenus, mismanaged the situation by not following Psellus' advice, and sent Psellus as an envoy to Isaac only after the rebels had already defeated the loyalist army. Psellus gives a detailed and suspenseful account of his embassy, which in his telling won him Isaac's respect but failed to prevent Michael's abdication and tonsure and Isaac's accession.

Psellus expresses admiration for Isaac I because of his firmness of purpose and his ability both to be serious and to relax, but he criticizes Isaac for introducing reforms too quickly. To explain himself, Psellus inserts a long digression on the decline of the empire, comparing it to a gigantic animal that all the emperors after Basil II had fattened, swelled, abused, and deformed by spending too much on luxuries, largess, and ostentatious buildings but not enough on the army. Yet the historian criticizes Isaac for enraging the overindulged beast by making excessively radical economies. While expressing ambivalence about Isaac's deposition of the patriarch Michael Cerularius, Psellus praises Isaac's choice of the new patriarch, Constantine Lichudes, Psellus' friend. After Isaac's inconclusive campaign against the Pechenegs, Psellus discusses the emperor's serious though not fatal illness, which led to his tonsure and abdication in favor of Constantine Ducas, with Psellus' support. A laudatory description of Constantine X at his accession evidently marks the end of the original version of the *Chronography*.[104]

[104] Psellus, *Chronography* VII.91, implying that Psellus deserved credit for Constantine's accession, seems to have been the original ending, while VII.92 apparently begins the supplement. The first sentence of VII.85 (Ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν περὶ τῆς βασιλείας λόγος ἀναμεινάτω)

Unlike all but the very end of the original *Chronography*, the supplement that Psellus added in 1074 becomes increasingly distorted by his deference, not to say subservience, to the Ducas family. Emphasizing his unfailing intimacy with Constantine X, Psellus praises the emperor for his justice, economizing, piety, military victories, and mercy. Psellus then rather carelessly repeats much of what he has already said in his original version about Constantine, his family, and his accession.[105] Insisting that his history is not an "encomium," Psellus briefly criticizes the emperor for ignoring Psellus' advice to spend more money on the army.[106] With this Psellus resumes his praise and concludes his account of the reign by quoting a few of Constantine's sayings that recall the imperial maxims in the *Concise History*. For example, Constantine reportedly expressed the wish that he should be better known as a scholar than as an emperor.[107]

Psellus depicts the empress Eudocia as an intelligent and conscientious regent, and praises Michael VII for not demanding the full authority to which his age and abilities entitled him (though Michael was actually only about eleven years old and backward).[108] Psellus admits that Eudocia was not personally ambitious, and blames bad advisers for her unwise remarriage. The historian describes Romanus IV Diogenes, the son of a plotter against Romanus III, as himself a conspirator against Eudocia's regency whom the empress should have executed rather than married.[109] Psellus says that Romanus treated him with respect but disregarded his good advice to make thorough preparations before fighting the Turks. Psellus protests his reluctance to condemn the emperor for the boldness that led to his defeat and captivity at Manzikert.

Professing always to have favored a compromise between Michael VII and Eudocia and Romanus, the historian also declares that he enjoyed Michael's full confidence. The *Chronography* concludes not with an account of the first part of Michael's reign, which is never discussed, but with an extended panegyric of Michael and shorter panegyrics of his baby son, Constantine, two brothers, and uncle John Ducas the Caesar. While Psellus presumably envisaged the possibility of continuing his history later, it cannot be considered incomplete in its present form.[110] Its concluding praise for John Ducas would, however, have made

should probably be translated, "But let our reference to his reign be postponed," alluding to VII.89–91, rather than translating λόγος as "account" and supposing that this sentence is a later addition referring to Book VIIa.

[105] Cf. Psellus, *Chronography* VII.83–91, with VIIa.6–14.

[106] Psellus, *Chronography* VIIa.17–18.

[107] Psellus, *Chronography* VIIa.29.

[108] See p. 279 n. 46 above.

[109] Psellus, *Chronography* VIIb.10.

[110] Impellizzeri is doubtless right to conclude that the letter from Michael VII to Nicephorus Botaniates that appears with an introduction after the *Chronography* in *Parisinus graecus* 1712 was not meant by Psellus to be part of the *Chronography*. Whether or not the letter was drafted by Psellus (as Riedinger, "Remarques (2)," p. 249, considers probable), it seems to have been added as a fourth text to continue the composite historical narrative in that MS. (See p. 288 n. 87 above.) Note that the letter does not appear in *Sinaiticus* 1117, our other witness to the final pages of the *Chronography*.

it awkward to continue without making revisions after rebels proclaimed John emperor in 1074, just after Psellus finished writing.[111]

The uniqueness of the *Chronography*

The *Chronography* is one of the most interesting Byzantine histories, but by no means a typical Byzantine history. It includes unusually few names and, in spite of its title, *Chronography*, no dates. It gives relatively little attention to narrating events of any sort, and least of all to military and ecclesiastical history. Among the major developments of its time, it barely refers to Basil II's conquests in Bulgaria and the East, the loss of Byzantine Italy to the Normans, the Turkish raids and conquests in the East, or the struggles of the patriarch Michael Cerularius with the emperors from Constantine IX to Isaac I. The *Chronography* deals almost exclusively with the imperial court, and even so its treatment of the empire's financial, military, and foreign policies is scanty and impressionistic. While speaking in generalities about the empire's tribulations, Psellus never mentions how the emperors debased the gold coinage or let the regular army melt away, though the coinage and army had been pillars of the empire for centuries and were virtually destroyed during the very period covered by the *Chronography*.[112]

Although anomalous as a history, the *Chronography* is no better described as a set of biographies of emperors. Certainly it has much to say about emperors; but its treatment of them is more like that in the histories of Theophanes, Genesius, or Symeon the Logothete than like that in the *Life of Basil* or Psellus' *Concise History*, which are the closest things to imperial biographies we find in the middle Byzantine period. In the *Chronography* Psellus seldom refers to the lives of the emperors before or after their reigns or to the emperors' families, except when imperial relatives affected politics. In fact, the *Chronography* gives much more attention to courtiers than was customary in middle Byzantine histories, most of which concentrate narrowly on the actions of the emperor and leave the impression that he made all the important decisions by himself. One of the strengths of the *Chronography* is that it shows how the emperors scarcely ever acted without taking advice (if often bad advice) from a chief minister and a number of lesser advisers.

Neither can the *Chronography* properly be called an autobiography or memoir. Most of what we know about Psellus' early life, family, and friends comes from other sources than the *Chronography*, which tells us comparatively little about what he did at court. Psellus mentions himself frequently in the *Chronography*, but only when he was a witness or contributor to significant decisions or events. Though no doubt he sometimes exaggerated his importance, he seldom mentions doing or thinking anything that had no bearing on the more general history of

[111] See p. 280 n. 48 above.

[112] Cf. the *Chronography* with the accounts of the same period in Treadgold, *History*, pp. 513–33 and 583–611, and Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, pp. 1–91, even though both Angold and I make ample use of the *Chronography* as a source.

his times. He pays more attention than most historians to the history of education, in which he played a prominent part, but this is again one of the strengths of the *Chronography*. One of the reasons the work is so interesting is that Psellus includes many revealing anecdotes from his own experience, but most of these are well chosen and reveal more about the emperors and other important people than about Psellus himself. He appears more often in his work than other historians do in theirs partly because he participated more in historical events, and partly because he was more willing to tell a good story when he could. Symeon the Logothete must have known similar details about Constantine VII and Romanus II, but Symeon discreetly kept most of them to himself, though he felt free to repeat old gossip from the lost History of Basil I and Leo VI.

The *Chronography* is an unusual and remarkable history because Michael Psellus was an unusual and remarkable man. He does not, however, seem to have written it with great care. If the mistakes in it are few, the main reason is probably that he had a good politician's encyclopedic memory for details that affected contemporary politics, along with an instinct for avoiding misstatements that might cause him trouble later. He was less interested in accuracy about earlier events, as his *Concise History* shows. Even in the *Chronography* he makes the careless error that Basil Lecapenus was the bastard son of Constantine VII rather than of Romanus I Lecapenus.[113] He includes almost no dates or statistics, though he did recall the approximate sum of "two hundred thousand talents" that Basil II had left in the imperial treasury at his death.[114] Psellus cared so little about chronology that he made a mistake about his own childhood, declaring that he was too young to remember whether he had seen either Basil II or Constantine VIII because "the emperor Basil died when I was an infant, and Constantine died when I was just beginning my first lessons."[115] Actually Psellus was seven at Basil's death and ten at Constantine's, and since we know that he began his elementary education at four, he must somehow have miscalculated by a half-dozen years. No doubt his offhand statement that most of the emperors in his lifetime ruled "for a single year" is exaggerated for effect, but a writer more concerned with chronology would probably have chosen his words differently.[116]

The *Chronography* also includes a number of other inconsistencies, however minor or explicable they may be. For example, just after declaring that anyone whom Bardas Phocas struck was killed instantly, Psellus tells us that Phocas struck Bardas Sclerus and merely put him to flight.[117] Soon after telling us, not very

[113] Psellus, *Chronography* I.3.

[114] Psellus, *Chronography* I.31, meaning two hundred thousand centenaria (20 million pounds of gold, = 1.44 billion nomismata).

[115] Psellus, *Chronography* III.1.

[116] Psellus, *Chronography* IV.11. In fact, even if we round to the nearest year the eleven reigns during Psellus' lifetime until 1062, only the reigns of Michael V, Zoë and Theodora jointly, and Michael VI lasted for a year or less, and since Zoë was co-ruler for much longer and Theodora ruled for more than a year by herself, neither can be said to have lasted for just a year.

[117] Cf. Psellus, *Chronography* I.7, with I. 8.

plausibly, that philosophers and orators flourished under Basil II, Psellus mentions how few and superficial philosophers and orators were just three years after Basil's death, under Romanus III.[118] Quite soon after describing Michael V's popularity with the common people of Constantinople, Psellus records how they rose in a mob that overthrew him.[119] While deploring the exorbitant spending of Basil Lecapenus, Romanus III, and Constantine IX on their favorite monasteries, Psellus praises Michael IV for building a monastery that outshone those of nearly all his predecessors.[120] Psellus condemns Michael V, Constantine IX, and Michael VI for promoting many men to high offices and ranks, then praises Constantine X for doing the same thing.[121] This contradiction could easily have been avoided without criticizing Constantine X simply by not mentioning the many promotions he made.

The organization of the *Chronography* is loose and episodic, as if Psellus had begun it with no more systematic plan than to cover the reigns of the emperors in order and never went back to make insertions or deletions. Although he could easily have transferred the general considerations in his delayed preface from his account of Constantine IX to the beginning of his work and made them into a regular preface, he left them at the juncture where he had thought of them. He never bothered to edit or eliminate his repetitious account of the accession of Constantine X in the last part of the original version and at the beginning of the supplement. He interrupts his account of his conversation with the nobilissimus Constantine in 1042 to explain a reference to Michael V's castration of his relatives, an interruption that could easily have been avoided by mentioning the castration at the point when it happened.[122] Of course, none of these changes was necessary or would necessarily have been an improvement. They would merely have made the *Chronography* read more like a formal history and less like a series of stories told from memory. Apparently Psellus was either content with the impression he gave or failed to notice it.

While Psellus shared with most other Byzantine historians a feeling that elegant prose should avoid mentioning exact dates, he could also go to extraordinary lengths to avoid mentioning personal names. For foreign peoples he mixes contemporary names with classicizing substitutions for them, and can refer in a single sentence to Basil II's taking plunder from "Iberians" and "Arabs" and from "Celts" (Bulgarians?) and "Scythians" (Armenians?).[123] Naturally he mentions many Byzantines by name, but he gives only descriptions of a surprising number of important people, whom we sometimes cannot identify even with the help of other sources. These unnamed

[118] Cf. Psellus, *Chronography* I.29, with III.3.

[119] Cf. Psellus, *Chronography* V.15–16, with V.26–30.

[120] Cf. Psellus, *Chronography* I. 20 (Basil Lecapenus), III.14–16 and IV.5 (Romanus III), and VI.185–88 (Constantine IX), with IV.31–32 (Michael IV).

[121] Cf. Psellus, *Chronography* V.15–16 (Michael V), VI.29–30 (Constantine IX), and VII.2 (Michael VI), with VIIa.15 (Constantine X).

[122] Psellus, *Chronography* V.41–42.

[123] Psellus, *Chronography* I.31.

persons include some whom Psellus disliked, such as Constantine IX's favorite Romanus Boïlas and Theodora's and Michael VI's minister Leo Paraspondylus, but also Psellus' close friends Constantine Lichudes and John Xiphilinus.[124] Sometimes Psellus refers to someone by a description and names him only later.[125] Psellus shows the same aversion to mentioning names in his other works, where he never names his father, sisters, adopted daughter, or grandson and mentions his mother's name only once, though he seems to have been greatly attached to all of them.

Psellus' prose style combines formality and elegance with elaboration and obscurity.[126] Though in many places a puzzled scribe probably miscopied our text of the *Chronography*, most of which survives in just one manuscript, some incoherent passages that the editors have emended may well have been no clearer when Psellus dictated them. In fact, since Psellus mentions dictating his history, and our manuscripts are filled with errors that could result only from oral transmission, he seems to have dictated the *Chronography* without revising it, as he had done with the *Concise History*.[127] Nevertheless, his work in the *Chronography*, in contrast with that of his *Concise History*, cannot fairly be described as careless, however quickly it was done. As an inspired stylist and a master of grammar and rhetoric, Psellus knew how to convey his meaning when he wished but also how to write sentences that only the well-educated could decipher. While other Atticizing Byzantine writers occasionally used the dual number for hands or eyes to prove that they knew the forms, Psellus declines dual adjectives and conjugates dual verbs for good reasons: to stress that the Bulgarians had not one but two pretenders to their throne, or that Constantine IX had a wife and a mistress at the same time, or, in the last sentence of the supplement to the *Chronography*, that both Constantine X and Michael VII were "invincible," so that the final word in the text is in the dual.[128]

[124] Psellus, *Chronography* VI.80 (Constantine IX's envoy to George Maniaces [Pardus: *PBW*, Anonymus 178), VI.135–43 (Constantine IX's favorite [Romanus Boïlas: *PBW*, Romanos 62]), VI.145 and 151 (Constantine's Alan mistress [unknown: *PBW*, Anonyma 210]), VI.177–81 (Constantine's chief minister [John the Logothete: *PBW*, Ioannes 115]), VIa.6 and VII.32 (Theodora's and Michael VI's chief minister [Leo Paraspondylus: *PBW*, Leon 62]), VII.18 (Psellus' fellow envoys to Isaac Comnenus [Theodore Alopus and Constantine Lichudes: *PBW*, Theodoros 106 and Konstantinos 106]), VII.77 (Isaac I's physician [*PBW*, Anonymus 7033]), VIIa.26 (patriarch [John Xiphilinus: *PBW*, Ioannes 18]), VIIb.5 (the evil adviser of Eudocia [unknown]), and VIIb.33 (the youngest son of John Ducas [Constantine: *PBW*, Konstantinos 61]).

[125] Psellus, *Chronography* VII.11 and 14 (Theodore the Domestic [*PBW*, Theodoros 105]) and VIIc.34 and 38 (Chataturius [*PBW*, Chatatourios 61]).

[126] Still see Renauld, *Étude*.

[127] See Riedinger, "Remarques (1)," p. 98, citing Psellus, *Chronography* VI.73 (ὑπαγορεύσας), and cf. my remarks on Psellus' *Concise History*, pp. 286–88 above.

[128] See Psellus, *Chronography* IV.48 (the pretenders Dolian and Alusian), VI.59 (Constantine IX's wife Zoë and mistress Scleraena), and VIIc.17 (πλὴν τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀνεψιοῦ τοῖν δυοῖν βασιλέοιν καὶ ἀηττήτοιν). The final phrase of the *Chronography* is not in the Paris MS but appears in the Sinai MS and is rightly included in the text by Impellizzeri. Psellus would hardly have risked offending Michael VII by concluding with the sentence, "In everything he [John Ducas] has surpassed everyone" without adding, "except for his brother and his nephew, the two emperors, who are also invincible."

Even if the most labyrinthine passages baffle us, as Psellus probably expected them to puzzle Constantine IX and Michael VII, most of the prose is clear enough, and the rest can be appreciated for the virtuosity of its obscurity. The *Chronography* gives an impression not so much of haste as of spontaneity.

Even though Psellus was not much interested in narrative history, the *Chronography* includes some vivid and exciting episodes, most of which Psellus had witnessed himself. Some of them are short, like the single combat between Bardas Sclerus and Bardas Phocas, the pathetic assassination of Romanus III, the dramatic death of George Maniaces in battle, and Eudocia's breaking the news of her remarriage to Psellus and her son Michael. Others are rather longer, like Romanus III's doomed expedition against Aleppo, the Russian attack on Constantinople under Constantine IX, and the supposedly fatal illness of Isaac I. The most important set pieces go on for several pages: the great popular uprising against Michael V, Leo Tornices' besieging Constantine IX in Constantinople, and Psellus' embassy to the camp of the rebel Isaac Comnenus. As one of few Byzantine writers to show much interest in physical appearances, including bodies as well as faces, Psellus provides verbal portraits of almost all his emperors and empresses and of some lower-ranking figures, like George Maniaces and Constantine IX's mistress Scleraena. Psellus even describes the two emperors he had never seen, Basil II and Constantine VIII, presumably recalling what older men like Isaac I had told him.

We know that Psellus considered himself a good judge of character, and his success as a courtier shows that he was not mistaken.[129] His character sketches of emperors in the *Chronography* are deservedly famous and go well beyond his bestowing a few adjectives to shape his whole treatment of each reign. Every emperor but Michael VII receives at least a little blame and at least a little praise, since Psellus thought that all rulers' "worse and better deeds are interwoven."[130] He realized that emperors could change over time and believed that both Basil II and Michael IV had matured in office; but most of the rulers described in the *Chronography* failed to improve, including the good-natured but lazy Constantine IX, whose reign was the longest in Psellus' lifetime. The most damning of Psellus' judgments are subtle and ironic, like his supposedly reluctant criticism of Constantine IX and his remark on the courtiers who chose Michael VI: "Now I do not really wish to characterize the one whom they preferred to the others, and I shall not assert that they totally missed the right target, except to say that the one they chose was not so much the sort of man to rule as the sort of man to *be* ruled and to be led."[131]

Even if Psellus wrote the *Chronography* quickly, as he almost certainly did, he must have meant for it to be taken seriously—far more seriously than he expected his *Concise History* or his panegyrics to be taken. The *Chronography* is mostly about contemporary politics, in which Psellus had long been deeply involved, and since it includes many observations on those politics, it can to a limited extent

[129] See Psellus, *Oratoria Minora*, p. 152.13–20, where he claims, only a little facetiously, that his insight allows him to discern the future character of his infant grandson.

[130] Psellus, *Chronography* VI.25.

[131] Psellus, *Chronography* VIa.20.

be considered a work of political philosophy, though its concerns are far more with practice than with theory. It is not, however, a work of the sort of theoretical philosophy discussed in the works of Plotinus, Porphyry, and Proclus, in which Psellus was much interested, and in no sense is the *Chronography* a work of theology. To look in it for carefully constructed philosophical or theological arguments is to ask more of it than it was intended to provide.[132] Nevertheless, since it deals with some important questions in a serious way, it incidentally reveals a good deal about Psellus' philosophical and religious views, which sometimes seem to have clashed with each other. He was passionately interested in Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophy, which while not utterly incompatible with orthodox Christianity were not fully compatible with it either. Because Psellus never had the leisure or inclination to construct a great synthesis of Christianity and Platonism like Thomas Aquinas' synthesis of Christianity and Aristotelianism, his thought sometimes contained inconsistencies.[133]

Even if his Christianity was not always impeccably orthodox, Psellus showed clear signs of conventional piety. He was deeply impressed when the dying emperor Michael IV became a monk, an act that was not uncommon for Byzantine laymen but absolutely unprecedented for an emperor; this final conversion seems to be the reason Psellus judges Michael more favorably than most other emperors and believes he attained salvation despite his sins of adultery and murder.[134] Psellus' encomium of his mother, which unlike the *Chronography* he wrote entirely on his own initiative, mentions the concerns that he had for the salvation of both his father and his mother, which were allayed by seeing dreams that they were in heaven.[135] He evidently connected their salvation with the fact that they too had entered monasteries shortly before they died.[136] Although Psellus also had political reasons for entering a monastery, that he did so not long after his mother's death is unlikely to have been a complete coincidence, and he ends his encomium of her by asking for her prayers to make him a better monk.[137]

132 I therefore cannot accept the premise of Kaldellis, *Argument*, p. 149: "My analysis proceeds on the assumption that the thoughts of an intelligent philosopher on 'the more important matters' should not be considered contradictory unless all other possibilities have been exhausted. For apparent contradictions may point toward hidden or implied teachings." This assumption is reasonable if the philosopher is writing a systematic philosophical treatise, but the *Chronography* is a more casual work and primarily a history.

133 Kaldellis, *Argument*, presents an extended discussion of the incongruities between Psellus' philosophy and orthodox Christianity, some of which seem to me more apparent than real.

134 Psellus, *Chronography* IV.52–55. Though previous emperors had been deposed and forced into monasteries, no previous emperor had entered a monastery voluntarily. Isaac I, who did so later, was probably influenced by Michael IV's example.

135 Psellus, *Encomium* 20b–d (his father) and 26a–d (his mother).

136 Psellus, *Encomium* 16d (both), 18a (his father), and 23a–b (his mother).

137 Psellus, *Encomium* 31. Unlike Kaldellis, *Mothers*, p. 61 n. 45, I feel sure that we are meant to see the Virgin, not a secular personification of rhetoric or philosophy, in the woman who appeared in a dream with Sts. Peter and Paul to tell Psellus' mother to educate her son in literature (*Encomium* 5d); besides the presence of Peter and Paul, note the

On the other hand, Psellus' retirement to the Bithynian Mount Olympus was obviously not a success, and on his return he lived as a very secular sort of monk. As already noted, in the *Chronography* he criticizes Basil Lecapenus, Romanus III, and Constantine IX for spending lavishly on monasteries, and Psellus seems to have excused Michael IV only because he actually joined the monastery he founded.[138] In denouncing the overspending of the emperors before Isaac I, the historian gives prominence to their construction of sumptuous monasteries "so that people who were idle by nature and contributed nothing to the state might live in luxury and dishonor the name and reality of virtue."[139] At least after his own experience in a monastery, Psellus opposed heavy spending on monasteries and churches and on monks whose lives were far from ascetic, though this need not imply that he was opposed to monasticism of a simpler sort.[140] Psellus' equivocal praise for the empress Zoë's devotion to her icon of Christ, which she hugged and addressed "as if it were alive," does seem to show an intellectual's distaste for popular forms of religion but need not mean that Psellus questioned her sincerity, let alone the truth of Christianity.[141] Psellus certainly had strong differences with the patriarch Michael Cerularius, but so did many of his contemporaries, including Constantine IX, Theodora, and Isaac I.[142] Psellus was much happier with the next two patriarchs, his friends Constantine III Lichudes and John VIII Xiphilinus.

Since the *Chronography* appears in its original form to have been addressed to Constantine X, we may fairly ask whether it includes advice intended for him, as the *Concise History* was supposed to edify his son. One reason the original *Chronography* blames earlier emperors for making indiscriminate promotions may well have been that Psellus had been subtly but unsuccessfully urging Constantine to curtail his promotions, even though the supplement to the *Chronography* praises Constantine X for making them.[143] The original *Chronography* gently criticizes Constantine IX for showing excessive mercy to conspirators; this too may be meant to be advice for Constantine X, whose mercy to conspirators is noted in the supplement.[144] The original *Chronography* also declares that the warlike Basil II was the greatest of all emperors and that the rulers from Zoë and Theodora to Michael VI had caused the empire's military crisis by diverting spending from the army to other purposes. We can be reasonably sure that these passages were intended

unmistakably religious messages of the dreams in *Encomium* 5c (his mother's dream of St. John Chrysostom) and 23d (Psellus' dream of his mother with St. Basil).

[138] See p. 298 and n. 120 above.

[139] Psellus, *Chronography* VII.59.

[140] For the view that Psellus did oppose monasticism as such, see Kaldellis, *Argument*, pp. 80–89.

[141] See Psellus, *Chronography* VI.65–67, in which Kaldellis, *Argument*, pp. 111–12, is right to see at least some "satire."

[142] See particularly Kaldellis, *Argument*, pp. 161–66 and 173–75.

[143] See p. 298 and n. 121 above.

[144] Cf. Psellus, *Chronography* VI.132–33 (Constantine IX), with VIIa.22 (Constantine X).

as advice for Constantine X, because the supplement criticizes him for rejecting Psellus' advice to spend more on the army.[145]

We should also suspect implied advice to Constantine X in Psellus' observation that emperors too often refuse expert counsel, which is introduced as a comment on Constantine IX's ill-advised treatment of George Maniaces.[146] In another such case, Psellus tells how as Michael VI's envoy to Isaac Comnenus he first tried to persuade Isaac to drop his rebellion, then after Michael's sudden fall tried awkwardly to profess loyalty to Isaac. According to Psellus, the new emperor tearfully replied, "But I liked your speech better then, when it was insulting, than now, when it praises and flatters."[147] While this account appears to be essentially true, because Psellus is unlikely to have invented a story so unfavorable to himself, he seems to have told it as a means of cautiously encouraging Constantine X to be less susceptible to flattery. Constantine, who was not nearly as stupid as his son, probably did understand these implicit comments on his indiscriminate promotions, misplaced spending, aversion to unpleasant advice, and love of flattery. Although the emperor did not change, the appearance of the original version of the *Chronography* did roughly coincide with Psellus' loss of favor at court and was probably among its causes.

We may also ask whether the supplement to the *Chronography* written under Michael VII was intended to advise that emperor. Naturally its extravagant praise for Michael and his relatives cannot be taken any more seriously than the formal panegyrics of emperors that it so closely resembles.[148] Most Byzantine readers (though not necessarily young and foolish Byzantine emperors) rightly discounted the sincerity of anything addressed to a reigning emperor. Yet having bought himself Michael's attention with such praise, Psellus must have hoped that the emperor would not entirely overlook the rest of what the supplement had to say. When Psellus reported his advice to Michael's father to spend more on the army, that advice was presumably meant for Michael as well. In the supplement Michael was surely supposed to notice Psellus' advice to Romanus IV to make thorough preparations before fighting the Turks, because Psellus calls attention to it by adding, "but those who always babble against what I say (except some of them) destroyed our interests then, as they do now."[149] As the mysterious parenthesis suggests, however, Psellus had to be careful of giving offense even to Michael's advisers, and his opportunities to advise the dull young emperor were limited.

[145] Cf. Psellus, *Chronography* V.22 (Basil II), VI.7–9 (Zoë and Theodora), and VII.59 (the emperors before Isaac I), with VIIa.18 (Psellus and Constantine X).

[146] Psellus, *Chronography* VI.74.

[147] Psellus, *Chronography* VII.42.

[148] See Kaldellis, *Mothers*, p. 9, for the idea that Psellus' purpose in the supplement "was to expose the frivolity of his patrons the Doukai through sarcastic praise," which I find implausible. The panegyric was a well-established genre, and though no one thought it was candid, no one thought it was sarcastic either. If Psellus had thought anyone would consider his praise ironic, he would never have run the risk that an enemy more intelligent than the emperor (Nicephoritzes, for one) might point out the irony.

[149] Psellus, *Chronography* VIIb.12.

Since Psellus obviously hoped that not only the emperor but other contemporaries and posterity would read the *Chronography*, it can also be judged to some extent as an analysis of the political situation in Byzantium in the eleventh century. Its praise for the Ducas family is easily discounted. Psellus' protestations of his own influence at court are somewhat harder to judge, but his other works and those of some of his contemporaries suggest that though he sometimes exaggerated his influence in ruling circles he usually received at least a hearing.[150] His dislike of his main rivals, Leo Paraspondylus and Nicephoritzes, is expressed by omission rather than distortion, because the *Chronography* never mentions them by name and barely alludes to them.[151] To critics who objected that Psellus served unworthy emperors, he could have replied with some reason that he had to serve such emperors as he found, and that whatever part he had taken in replacing Isaac I with Constantine X and Romanus IV with Michael VII was the best that could have been done in difficult circumstances.

Psellus showed considerable courage by repeating in the original version of the *Chronography* that none of the emperors of his time was thoroughly good without making any explicit exception for the reigning emperor, Constantine X. Psellus even cites Plutarch to assert that all the great rulers of history, including "the two Caesars" (the dual number indicates Julius and Augustus), were "not divided into good and evil in equal parts, as we have learned from those who have recorded their lives, but were more inclined by far to the worse part."[152] Psellus did in fact serve under a generally incapable series of emperors, and most of the judgments he makes of them are defensible. He probably dealt somewhat too leniently with Michael IV and a little too harshly with Isaac I, Eudocia, and Romanus IV, but Psellus could hardly afford to give Isaac unqualified praise when writing under Constantine X, or to give Eudocia or Romanus unqualified praise under Michael VII.

How well did Psellus understand the problems of the Byzantine state in the eleventh century? The question is complicated by the fact that even today those problems are a subject of controversy. While a consensus has emerged that the empire's economy was expanding at the time, largely because its population was growing, some historians maintain the traditional view that the empire was catastrophically mismanaged, while others argue that it was undergoing necessary adjustments and reforms.[153] One important feature of the period that Psellus entirely neglects is the debasement of the coinage. The nomisma, the linchpin of the monetary system, declined during the reign of Constantine IX (1042–55) from

[150] See especially M. Jeffreys, "Psellos."

[151] See p. 299 n. 124 above for two indirect references to Paraspondylus. In Psellus, *Chronography* VIIb.12, Nicephoritzes is probably included among "those who always babble against what I say."

[152] Psellus, *Chronography* IV.11 and VI.26–27 and 162–63 (the reference to Plutarch). Although Psellus seems not to be referring to any passage in Plutarch's existing *Lives*, two of the six *Lives* that he mentions are now lost (*Augustus* and *Epaminondas*), and in any case he may be summarizing his general impression from reading many of the *Lives*.

[153] For the traditional view, see especially Treadgold, *History*, pp. 583–611, and for the revisionist view, see especially Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, pp. 1–113.

almost pure gold to just three-quarters gold. Then it remained relatively stable until the end of the reign of Constantine X (1059–67) but declined to two-thirds gold during Romanus IV's reign (1068–71) and to three-eighths gold during the reign of Michael VII (1071–78).[154] Even if Psellus was unable to foresee that a few years after he finished the *Chronography*, in 1074, the empire's whole regular army would disintegrate, and practically all of Anatolia, Armenia, and Syria would be lost to the Turks, when he wrote most of the *Chronography*, about 1062, he already saw that the army was in serious decline and that Anatolia, Armenia, and Syria were threatened.

Yet Psellus appears not to have realized how directly the debasement of the coinage led to the decline of the army and the threat to the empire's eastern provinces. The original reason for the debasement must have been the high cost of the unnecessarily large army, which seems to have numbered roughly a quarter-million men in 1025, most of whom were stationed far from the frontiers and had never fought except in a civil war. Since dismissing some of them or officially cutting their pay would surely have provoked another military rebellion, the government debased the coinage and paid the army the same sum in nomismata but less in gold. In order to avoid reducing the pay of the civil officials in Constantinople, who had to be kept satisfied, Constantine IX and Michael VI promoted them to higher ranks with higher nominal salaries, which made up for the inflation that the debasement inevitably caused. When the military officers asked Michael VI for similar promotions and were rebuffed, Isaac Comnenus mustered them in a successful revolt. Since the debasement would also have decreased revenues, because taxes were soon paid with debased nomismata, Isaac I found himself in financial straits and evidently failed to raise military pay. The army accordingly continued to decline until finally it fell apart, leaving only a small force of better-paid mercenaries that was too small to keep the Turks out of Anatolia.[155]

Like some modern scholars, Psellus appears to have seen much of the evidence for these developments without fully understanding it. Perhaps he was poorly informed about the debasement when he wrote, around 1062, because it may have been ordered without publicity after the dismissal of his friend Constantine Lichudes as chief minister, around 1050, and the mint probably received no orders for further debasement between 1055 and 1067.[156] Psellus claims that by Isaac I's reign the main state outlays were for the emperors' "life of pleasure," luxury

[154] See Hendy, *Studies*, pp. 508–12, noting that the nomisma, which was supposed to have a fineness of twenty-four carats, ranges from twenty-four to nineteen and a half carats under Michael IV (probably a temporary debasement), from twenty-four to eighteen carats under Constantine IX, from eighteen to sixteen carats under Romanus IV (a debasement probably intended to meet emergency military expenses), and from sixteen to nine carats under Michael VII.

[155] See Treadgold, *Byzantium*, especially pp. 75–85 (on the size of the army around 1025), 135–41 (on military pay), and 214–19 (on developments in the eleventh century).

[156] Psellus could hardly have criticized the earlier debasement when he wrote the supplement to the *Chronography*, around 1073, because by then a further and much more drastic debasement was in progress under Michael VII.

buildings, and civil-service salaries, leaving inadequate funds for the army.[157] By contrast, a rough estimate of the state budget at the time of Basil II's death, in 1025, would put military expenses around three-quarters of the total, civil-service salaries around a seventh, and all other expenses around a ninth. The latter two categories presumably amounted to more of the budget under Basil's extravagant successors; but the promotions of civil servants probably did little more than make up for inflation, and the emperors' pleasures and luxury buildings, apart from being items that were easy to curtail, must have been less expensive than civil salaries. None of the eleventh-century churches was nearly as ambitious as Justinian's St. Sophia, which in a year had cost only about a fourteenth of Basil II's annual military budget.[158]

Psellus was scandalized by what he considered the indiscriminate promotion of officials under Constantine IX, commenting, "Now two things preserve the power of the Romans—I mean honors and riches—and a third besides, the intelligent management of these things and the use of reason in their distribution."[159] This is the point of view of a courtier who felt that he had worked hard for his title and salary and was outraged that others less deserving than he should be similarly rewarded. To most others, however, including modern observers, an inflation of court titles or even of court salaries seems a less serious matter, especially if the salaries merely kept up with monetary inflation. Similarly, Psellus thought most of the churches and monasteries built by the emperors of his time were a waste of money, though he made an exception for Michael IV and in his *Concise History* began the list of Justinian's "good actions" by saying, "He built a church to the Wisdom of God [St. Sophia], such as no other emperor built before or after him."[160] In any case, the construction projects of the eleventh century did much less than the debasement of the nomisma to impoverish the state treasury.

Psellus, who prided himself on his knowledge of strategy, thought small armies were more efficient than large ones, an opinion that he claimed was shared by Isaac I.[161] Though no doubt a good field army can be effective even if small, and a bad field army can be ineffective even if large, in a battle between equally good armies the larger one has the advantage, and a large number of garrison troops were needed to defend the Byzantines' long frontiers in Armenia and Syria. While

157 Psellus, *Chronography* VII.59.

158 For all these budgetary estimates, see Treadgold, *Byzantium*, pp. 188–98, estimating Basil II's military expenses at about 4.1 million nomismata a year, civil-service salaries at about 0.8 million, and all other expenses at about 0.6 million, for a total of about 5.5 million (excluding an annual surplus of about 0.35 million); Justinian spent a reported 0.3 million nomismata on St. Sophia in one year. While all these figures are in varying degrees approximate, the overall picture they give cannot be far wrong.

159 Psellus, *Chronography* VI.29.

160 Psellus, *Concise History* 71.

161 See Kaldellis, *Argument*, pp. 170–71 and n. 350, citing Psellus, *Chronography* I.7, 11, and 32–33, III.7–9, IV.43, VI.82–83, VII.8 (on Isaac I) and 11, and VIIb.16. Psellus, *Chronography* VIIb.16, declares improbably that Romanus IV, an experienced general, envied Psellus' knowledge of strategy.

during most of the eleventh century the Byzantine army doubtless had more men on its rolls than it needed, Constantine IX made a disastrous mistake when he released most of the soldiers in Armenia from service in return for their paying a tax—a measure that, unlike John Scylitzes and Michael Attaliates, Psellus never mentions.[162] In this case he may have accepted the courtiers' conventional justification for cutting military spending: that the army could provide a satisfactory defense at less expense by more efficient use of its resources. The army could indeed have done so, but not without dismissing unneeded troops in the interior provinces, as the government was unwilling to do.

During the course of Psellus' career only two emperors made any serious effort to restore the strength of the Byzantine army: Isaac I and Romanus IV. Psellus played a prominent part in removing each of them from power. His argument against their policies was the same in both cases: that they tried to do too much too quickly.[163] Yet we have no reason to believe that proceeding more slowly would have produced a better result for either Isaac or Romanus. The fiscal and military situation of the empire was bad under Isaac and dire under Romanus, and restoring it required a sense of urgency that the other emperors of their time conspicuously lacked. Although Isaac made himself unpopular in some quarters, his reign ended not because he was about to be overthrown but because he fell ill and let himself be persuaded to abdicate, by Psellus among others. Romanus was almost certainly betrayed by the Ducas family at the battle of Manzikert and was certainly betrayed by them after it, with Psellus' approval. Psellus may possibly have believed what he said in criticism of Isaac and Romanus, but he surely believed that their removal was in his own best interest, though even in that he may have been mistaken.

The *Chronography*, while not a comprehensive history of its times, is a brilliant performance. For one thing, it is an invaluable piece of historical evidence, conveying the views of an important and highly intelligent participant in decisions at the highest levels of the Byzantine government. Thanks to the *Chronography*, the rulers whom Psellus served and described are, along with Psellus himself, among the people we know best in all of Byzantine history. Even a memoir by one of those rulers could hardly have been so perceptive and forthright. That we have only one complete and one very incomplete manuscript of the *Chronography* seems surprising, because many of the readers of Byzantine histories were government officials and shared many of Psellus' concerns. Yet they tended to prefer more comprehensive histories, and especially world histories. In later years, the details of court politics under a series of unsatisfactory emperors may not have seemed to warrant a history of such length. Moreover, the *Chronography* was one among several contemporary accounts of that period, including the more conventional histories of Michael Attaliates and John Scylitzes.[164] Some readers

162 See p. 265 and n. 164 above.

163 Psellus, *Chronography* VII.51 and 62 (Isaac) and VIIb.12 (Romanus IV).

164 Contemporary narratives of part or all of the period covered by Psellus' *Chronography* included not only the extant histories of Attaliates and Scylitzes but the lost histories of Demetrius of Cyzicus and John the Monk.

were surely put off by Psellus' convoluted style, which made his history difficult to read. Its failure to be copied much may also have been largely accidental. If Psellus circulated it only among the reigning emperors and his friends, and none of them had multiple copies made, it may never have reached many Byzantines who would have been interested in reading it.

Modern readers may well find the *Chronography* the most appealing of all Byzantine histories. The reason is not just that Psellus was a talented writer, because many of his other works, like his panegyrics and *Concise History*, are rather tedious. In the *Chronography*, however, even if it was written at the request of an emperor, Psellus was writing about the things in life that fascinated him most. These included his scholarship, his teaching, and his friends, but most of all Byzantine court politics. An attentive and gifted student of human nature and how it could be manipulated, Psellus cultivated emperors, officials, generals, palace servants, and everyone else connected with the court and high society in the capital—not just because he hoped to become rich, respected, famous, and powerful, but because he loved to play the game and played it very skillfully. He had all the qualities he needed to succeed as a Byzantine courtier: charm, versatility, prudence, intelligence, education, and genius as a speaker and writer. When he came to chronicle his times as he had seen and lived them, he wrote with zest and left us a magnificent record of his world.

9
Psellus' Contemporaries

When Psellus composed the original version of his *Chronography*, around 1062, the readership for Byzantine histories seems to have been expanding. Though new histories continued to appear at roughly the same rate as they had since the later eighth century, the picture changes if we consider histories that survive today in ten or more manuscripts and seem to have reached more than a marginal Byzantine readership. While the three hundred years before 1060 produced just six such histories, the next fifty years produced four, with five more to come in the following hundred years.[1] This expansion had little to do with Psellus, whose historical works had a modest circulation. The reason was rather an enlargement of the audience for all Byzantine literature that accompanied growing prosperity and urbanization in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[2] Psellus observed with dismay that under the eleventh-century emperors more and more new men were being made government officials.[3] When such men entered the bureaucracy, they sent their sons to the secondary schools that taught future bureaucrats how to read classical and classicizing literature with pleasure, or at any rate with respect. After reading Thucydides and perhaps Herodotus and Xenophon at school, some graduates went on to read Byzantine histories or even to write them.

[1] See the table on pp. 490–92 below. The histories written before 1060 and preserved in ten or more MSS are Nicephorus' *Concise Chronography*, George the Monk's *Concise Chronicle*, George Syncellus' *Selection of Chronography*, Theophanes' *Chronography*, the first edition of Symeon the Logothete's *Chronicle*, and Constantine VII's *Historical Excerpts*; those written after 1060 are John Xiphilinus' Epitome of Dio, John Scylitzes' *Synopsis of Histories* and *Epitome of History* (including *Scylitzes Continuatus*), George Cedrenus' *Compendium of Histories*, Anna Comnena's *Alexiad*, John Zonaras' *Epitome of Histories*, Michael Glycas' *Chronicle*, Constantine Manasses' *Chronological Synopsis*, and Nicetas Choniates' *Chronological Narrative*.

[2] On this general phenomenon, see Mango, *Byzantium*, pp. 80–87 (urbanization), 142–43 (the growth of schools), and 237–38 (the expansion of readership), Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change*, pp. 31–39 (urbanization), 120–26 (the growth of schools), and 197–98 (showing some hesitation about the expansion of readership), and Treadgold, *History*, pp. 691–95 (the expansion of readership) and 699–706 (urbanization and prosperity).

[3] Psellus, *Chronography* V.15–16, VI.29–30, VII.2, and VIIa.15.

Xiphilinus' *Epitome of Dio*

The first of these newly popular historical works was the epitome of Cassius Dio's *Roman History* by John Xiphilinus the Younger, nephew of Psellus' friend the patriarch John VIII Xiphilinus.[4] Because the epitomator observes that he worked during Michael VII's reign and mentions that his uncle was patriarch of Constantinople without adding "of blessed memory," the epitome should presumably be dated between Michael's accession, in 1071, and the patriarch's death, in 1075.[5] We know that before the elder John distinguished himself the Xiphilini were an obscure family in the provincial town of Trebizond.[6] Since the younger John identifies himself not by a rank but only as his uncle's nephew, he probably came from Trebizond to seek his fortune in the capital after his uncle became patriarch, in 1064, not when the uncle was still a monk on Mount Olympus who could offer little help to his relatives. The nephew received a good classical education, of a sort most likely to be obtained at a school in Constantinople. He probably is the same John Xiphilinus who appeared with the official rank of vestarch at John Italus' trial for heresy, in 1082. Perhaps the epitomator was born around 1050, came to Constantinople for his secondary education around 1064, composed his epitome around 1073 to advance his career, and found his place in the bureaucracy before 1082. Later he may possibly have become the monk John Xiphilinus who wrote homilies and hagiography under Alexius I (1081–1118).[7]

Perhaps on the advice of his learned uncle, the younger Xiphilinus chose a promising project, because Dio's was the most comprehensive account of Roman imperial history. Xiphilinus entitled his work *Epitome of Dio of Nicaea's Roman History, Which John Xiphilinus Abridged, Comprising the Reigns of Twenty-Five Caesars, From Pompey the Great to* [Severus] *Alexander the Son of Mamaea*. Apparently Xiphilinus used a copy of Dio's work that was missing Books I–XXXV (up to 68 B.C., where Xiphilinus begins) and LXX (on Antoninus Pius). Of Dio's original text, Photius and Constantine VII's excerptors apparently had all eighty books, while in the twelfth century John Zonaras had Books I–XXI but not XXII–XXXV. Xiphilinus cannot therefore have epitomized the most complete copy of Dio's history to be found in Constantinople at the time. Though today we have most of Books XXXVI–LX, we know Books LXI–LXXX (on A.D. 47–229) chiefly

[4] On this epitome, see Millar, *Study*, pp. 1–4, K. Ziegler in *RE* IXA2 (1967), cols. 2132–34, Kazhdan in *ODB* III, p. 2211, Brunt, "On Historical Fragments," pp. 488–92 (though confusing the epitomator with his uncle, the patriarch), and Wilson, *Scholars*, p. 179.

[5] Xiphilinus, *Epitome*, pp. 479 and 526.

[6] See *PBW*, Ioannes 18 (the patriarch).

[7] *PBW*, Ioannes 504. The protovestes Nicholas Xiphilinus (*PBW*, Nikolaos 254), also present at Italus' trial, was doubtless another relative. While the identification of the epitomator with the monk and homilist is assumed by Beck, *Kirche*, pp. 629–30, and most other authorities, nothing identifies the epitomator as a monk or churchman. Though John could of course have decided to become a monk after 1082, monks often adopted monastic names different from their given names.

from Xiphilinus' epitome.[8] When Xiphilinus reaches Augustus' constitutional arrangements in 27 B.C., in Dio's Book LIII, he declares he will begin to summarize at greater length: "Especially from this point on I shall relate in detail whatever things are necessary, because our way of life depends very much on those times, and our political system reflects them." Consequently his epitomes of the books after LIII, including those lost to us, are on average about three times as long as his epitomes of the earlier books, and about a quarter as long as Dio's full text.[9]

Xiphilinus appears to have been generally well read. He prefers Polybius' skepticism about omens to Dio's acceptance of them, and Plutarch's admiration for Brutus and Cassius to Dio's condemnation of them, and he adds from Plutarch's *Life of Marcellus* that Augustus' nephew Marcellus was descended from the Marcellus who had fought against Hannibal.[10] Probably Xiphilinus added these references from memory. He even makes an effort to fill in Dio's lost account of the reign of Antoninus Pius from Eusebius' *History of the Church* and an unknown source.[11] Xiphilinus adds at least thirty comments of his own to Dio's text, in one of them using the dual number twice (for Brutus and Cassius) and in another expressing qualified admiration for Cleopatra. His comments seem, however, to become fewer after the reign of Augustus.[12]

[8] According to one plausible reconstruction, in late antiquity Dio's eighty books were copied in fifteen volumes of four to seven books each. If so, they apparently reached Xiphilinus, Zonaras, and us as follows:

Known to Zonaras alone: I–XXI (vols. 1–3?)
Known to none: XXII–XXXV (vols. 4–5?)
Known to us and Xiphilinus: XXXVI–XLIII (vols. 6–7?)
Known to us, Xiphilinus, and Zonaras: XLIV–LX (vols. 8–10?)
Known to Xiphilinus and Zonaras: LXI–LXXX (vols. 11–15, with Xiphilinus' vol. 13 missing LXX at the end?).

[9] Xiphilinus, *Epitome*, p. 526. Note that the epitomes of Books XXVI–LII occupy about 43 pages in Boissevain's edition and the epitomes of Books LIII–LXXX (not counting LXX, which Xiphilinus lacked) take up about 207 pages.

[10] Xiphilinus, *Epitome*, pp. 495 (Plutarch on Brutus and Cassius), 506 (Polybius; Xiphilinus also ridicules Dio's credulity about omens on pp. 518–19), and 527 (based on Plutarch, *Marcellus* xxx.6).

[11] Xiphilinus, *Epitome*, pp. 658–59, citing Eusebius' *History of the Church* (IV.9) and one "Quadratus," who may be either the contemporary apologist and bishop of Athens (see *RE* XXIV [1963], col. 677) or, more likely, the historian of the early third century. (See Millar, *Study*, pp. 61–62 and n. 1, *RE* II [1896], cols. 1603–4, and *Suda* K 1905.) Since this citation from Quadratus is not in Eusebius' history, Xiphilinus presumably consulted an as yet unidentified chronicle (or scholion) that cited this obscure author.

[12] Each comment is marked in the margin with the notation "Xiph." by Boissevain in Xiphilinus, *Epitome*, pp. 481, 484 (twice), 485, 487 (twice), 494 (twice), 495, 497, 500 (duals: ἤστην … ἐλαχέτην), 501, 505, 506 (twice), 509, 515, 518, 518–19, 520, 521 (on Cleopatra), 523, 526 (twice), 527, 529–30, 530, 568, and 569–70. Boissevain makes no further notations after p. 570, because after p. 583 we no longer have Dio's original text to compare with the epitome, but Xiphilinus doubtless made more additions, including his treatment of Antoninus Pius. (See n. 11 above.)

Unfortunately for us, Xiphilinus omits most of Dio's dates and all of Dio's book divisions, since he arranges his material not by book numbers but by the reigns of emperors. Worse still, Xiphilinus' habit of making disconnected excerpts rather than summaries produced an awkward narrative that can be difficult to follow. It found readers nonetheless, because it supplied a basic narrative of Roman imperial history and was shorter and therefore cheaper than Dio's whole work. Xiphilinus' method was actually not so very different from that of earlier historians like Nicephorus, Theophanes, and Genesius, or later historians like Scylitzes, Cedrenus, and Zonaras, except that Xiphilinus mostly summarized one long source whereas the others mostly summarized several shorter sources. Zonaras was later to summarize Books I–XXI and XLIV–LXXX of Dio's history, thereby supplementing Xiphilinus' epitome. Apparently the Byzantines of this time were interested in the history of the early Roman empire, presumably because they agreed with Xiphilinus that it was more or less the same empire as their own.

Michael Attaliates

After Psellus, the next historian to write on the tumultuous politics of the eleventh century was Michael Attaliates.[13] We have a good deal of evidence for his life, both in his history and in a brief autobiography that serves as a preface to the rules he composed for a monastery and almshouse that he founded. Since Attaliates claims to write as a contemporary of all the events in his history, which nominally begins with 1034 but gives scarcely any information before 1040, he seems to have been born around 1020.[14] He says that his birthplace was "foreign," evidently meaning outside Constantinople. To judge from his surname, Attaliates, which he seems to have adopted when he came to the capital, he was born in the port of Attalia, on the southern coast of Anatolia. He seems to have been an only son, though he had sisters. His parents, Irenicus and Cale, had enough money to send him to school in Constantinople, where he apparently arrived around 1034. There he received a good secondary education in the standard classical authors and additional training in philosophy, rhetoric, and the law. He tells us that as a provincial he had difficulties at the beginning of his career, but he soon overcame them and prospered.[15]

For a short time Attaliates seems to have had trouble making a living as a lawyer without reliable connections in Constantinople. His *History* supplies a clue to the beginning of his success when he commends Michael V for "honoring as many as

[13] On Attaliates, see Pérez Martín, *Miguel*, pp. ix–lxvi, Kaldellis and Krallis, *History*, pp. vii–xx, *PBW*, Michael 202, Krallis, *Michael*, Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 382–89, Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* III, pp. 187–202, Gautier, "Diataxis," especially pp. 11–16, Lemerle, *Cinq études*, pp. 67–112, Thomas and Hero, *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents* I, pp. 326–76, Kazhdan, *Studies*, pp. 23–86, and Markopoulos, "Portrayal." I would like to thank Anthony Kaldellis for sending me a draft before publication of his annotated translation of Attaliates' *History*, which I have found quite helpful.

[14] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 5 and 8.

[15] Attaliates, *Diataxis*, pp. 19 (his family and education), 29–31 (further on his education), and 45 and 65 (his parents' names).

possible [of his subjects] with admirable ranks and offices" after his accession, in 1041.[16] Since Attaliates would have been unlikely to praise such promotions if he had been denied one of them, we may conclude that in 1041 he received a government appointment, probably his first, when he was around twenty. Because his later career was entirely in the judiciary, he seems likely to have begun climbing the ladder as a low-ranking judge in Constantinople.[17] He says that when Constantine IX became emperor, in 1042, he too "benefited his subjects by honoring almost everyone with imperial offices and lavish gifts," where "gifts" probably means high salaries.[18] From this hyperbole we should conclude not that the emperor promoted almost the whole Byzantine population but that he promoted almost all his officials, including Attaliates. The young provincial was no doubt one of those obscure outsiders whom Psellus criticized Michael V and Constantine IX for promoting indiscriminately.[19]

After remaining a bachelor for some time, around 1045 Attaliates married a well-connected young woman named Sophia, whose sister and aunt had husbands with the middling rank of protospatharius. Sophia brought her husband a small house in Constantinople, though the couple seem also to have bought from her aunt a somewhat larger house with a courtyard that adjoined the house of Sophia's sister. After several years of marriage Sophia died, apparently having borne Attaliates his only son, Theodore. The law professor John Xiphilinus, probably a friend of her family, served as executor of her will and distributed her property to the poor with her husband's consent, though Attaliates retained her small house and one of her estates, for which he paid. He also purchased the house next to his own from her sister and combined the two into a single mansion, along with another three-story structure that he also owned. This last building had a donkey-powered mill on its ground floor, which would have added to his income.[20]

[16] Attaliates, *Diataxis*, p. 19 (his initial difficulties), and *History*, p. 11 (Michael V's generosity).

[17] Pérez Martin, *Miguel*, p. xxix, speculates on the basis of Attaliates, *History*, p. 228, that his first appointment was as judge of the Theme of Crete; but this passage shows only that he had "visited" (ἐπιδεδημκὼς) Crete at some time in his life, and Attaliates, *History*, p. 256, says that he had served as a judge only in the capital and on campaigns. Attaliates, *Diataxis*, p. 27, says that he had never held an "executive office" (ἀρχικὴν ἐξουσίαν), a term that could reasonably be applied to the judge of a theme, who was an administrator (Kazhdan in *ODB* II, p. 1078, under "Judge").

[18] Attaliates, *History*, p. 18.

[19] Psellus, *Chronography* V.15–16 (Michael V) and VI.29–30 (Constantine IX).

[20] Attaliates, *Diataxis*, pp. 19 (bachelorhood, several years of marriage, and wife's property), 27–29 (house in Constantinople, purchased from his sister-in-law Anastaso, wife of a protospatharius and asecretis, with the consent of the nomophylax, evidently after Attaliates' wife's death, and the other house purchased from his wife's aunt Euphrosyne, wife of a protospatharius, probably earlier), 29 and 35 (his son, Theodore, mystographus and imperial notary by 1077), 45 and 65 (Sophia's name), and 117 (Theodore a biconsul by 1079). Since mystographus was a fairly high office and biconsul quite a high rank (see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, pp. 295 and 325), Theodore was probably not born much later than 1047. Note that Sophia must have died after 1047, since Xiphilinus' office of nomophylax was only created in that year (Gautier, "Diataxis," pp. 12–13).

Later Attaliates married a second wife, Irene, who seems to have owned valuable lands in and around the town of Rhaedestus, in Thrace, not far from the capital.[21] In his *History* he observes that in 1057 Isaac I gave "appropriate" honors to civilians, presumably including Attaliates, who doubtless thought that he deserved a promotion, especially if he had done without one for fifteen years.[22] In 1059 he mentions that Constantine X promoted "many" civil officials, again probably including Attaliates.[23] Yet he claims that he was still not a rich man in 1063, when he could barely afford to rebuild a house he had bought in Rhaedestus after it was damaged in an earthquake.[24] Probably when he reckoned his wealth he was excluding the property of his wife Irene. By this time he was in any case a prominent judge, whom the empress Eudocia appointed to the special court that convicted Romanus Diogenes of conspiracy in 1067.[25] This trial seems to have been mostly a matter of form, because Romanus, who confessed and had his sentence commuted from execution to exile, soon married Eudocia and became emperor.

Romanus IV certainly bore no grudge against Attaliates, whom he asked to serve as judge of his army and to accompany him on his first expedition against the Seljuk Turks in 1068. Although Attaliates was reluctant to go on Romanus' second expedition the next year, the emperor persuaded him by promoting him to the rank of patrician. Attaliates admired Romanus, who seems to have listened respectfully to his advice, though not always to have taken it. Attaliates also accompanied Romanus' disastrous expedition of 1071 and after the rout at Manzikert escaped to Trebizond and returned to the capital by ship.[26] Despite his sympathy for Romanus and Eudocia, Attaliates found himself on the side of Michael VII in the ensuing civil war and must have suppressed the indignation at Romanus' blinding that he expresses in his *History*. Perhaps during John of Side's brief tenure as Michael VII's chief minister, the young emperor promoted Attaliates to proconsul and commissioned him to write a legal treatise, which he dedicated to Michael with a panegyrical poem around 1073.[27]

[21] Attaliates, *Diataxis*, pp. 45 and 65. Apparently Attaliates had inherited the property he held in Rhaedestus from Irene, who was dead by 1077, because he says that he had given away all the property of his first wife.

[22] Attaliates, *History*, p. 60 (Isaac's promotions). Note that Attaliates, *History*, pp. 52–53, criticizes Michael VI for limiting his promotions to his close associates, indicating that Attaliates failed to benefit from the indiscriminate promotions attributed to that emperor by Psellus, *Chronography* VII.2.

[23] Attaliates, *History*, p. 71.

[24] Attaliates, *Diataxis*, pp. 25–27, evidently referring to the earthquake that he describes in his *History*, pp. 87–91.

[25] Attaliates, *History*, p. 98.

[26] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 102–3, 124, 162–63, and 167.

[27] This text, though usually dated to 1072 or 1073, has no date in the edition of Zepos and Zepos, *Jus* VII, pp. 409–97. Tsolakis, "Aus dem Leben," p. 4 nn. 3 and 4, gives the date as "1072/73" but cites only one piece of relevant evidence (n. 4), a MS title dating the work to March of A.M. 6247, or A.D. 739, which is impossible. If we emend ͵ϛσμζʹ to ͵ϛφπαʹ, which is not easy, the result is A.M. 6581, or A.D. 1073. (March 1072 would be ͵ϛφπʹ, an even more

In 1074 Attaliates became bitterly disappointed in the regime when it exiled and confiscated the property of his friend Basil Maleses, Psellus' son-in-law, a punishment Attaliates thought flagrantly unjust.[28] He was also indignant at the collapse of the empire's defenses in Anatolia and at the financial policies of the emperor's chief minister, Nicephoritzes, especially the state monopoly over grain sales at Rhaedestus, which must have reduced Attaliates' income from his nearby estates.[29] Attaliates must again have kept his objections to himself, because he remained in favor at court. The emperor made him a judge of the Velum, the most senior class of judge, and granted his properties at Rhaedestus perpetual immunity from extraordinary requisitions in a chrysobull of 1075.[30] The emperor also made Attaliates' son, Theodore, an imperial secretary. In March 1077, perhaps moved by the death of his second wife, Irene, Attaliates decided to turn his house at Constantinople into a monastery dedicated to Christ the All-Merciful, and much of his property at Rhaedestus into an almshouse administered by the monastery. In his surviving rules for these foundations, he reserved important rights over them to himself, his son, Theodore, and their descendants.

That autumn, while Attaliates was visiting his estates at Rhaedestus, the wife of a relative of the rebel Nicephorus Bryennius persuaded most of the city's notables to join Bryennius' rebellion. Taken by surprise, Attaliates managed to talk his way out of Rhaedestus and to reach Constantinople, where he went straight to Nicephoritzes and warned him to act immediately to defend Thrace against the rebels. Offended by Nicephoritzes' failure to take this warning seriously, Attaliates realized that the government cared little about him, his advice, or his property at Rhaedestus, which Bryennius' rebels looted along with the state grain warehouse.[31] After this, without supporting Bryennius, Attaliates became thoroughly exasperated with Michael VII's regime. His history praises the next emperor, Nicephorus III Botaniates, for his generosity in giving promotions to "all," who we may safely assume included Attaliates. He was probably promoted to the rank of vestes.[32] In spring 1078 he delivered a panegyric of Botaniates the day after the new emperor had blinded Bryennius.[33]

Attaliates disapproved of attempts to restrain Botaniates' munificence by the new chief minister, Michael of Nicomedia—probably Michael Psellus—who, however,

difficult emendation.) Note that Attaliates, *History*, pp. 180 and 182, praises the ministry of John of Side.

[28] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 187–88 and 192; see above, pp. 272–73 and 280.

[29] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 201–4, emphasizes the injustice done to purchasers (especially if we reject Pérez Martin's unlikely emendation of δέκα καὶ ὀκτὼ μοδίων to ὀκτὼ δέκατα μοδίου on p. 203); but he also mentions the injustice done to sellers, who presumably included himself as a landowner in this grain-producing region.

[30] Attaliates, *Diataxis*, pp. 101–9, mentioning the Velum on p. 105; for judges of the Velum ("curtain"), see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, pp. 322–23.

[31] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 244–46 and 248–49.

[32] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 272–73. Vestes was the next rank above patrician, Attaliates' rank at the time of his *Diataxis*, in March 1077.

[33] Attaliates, *History*, p. 292.

soon died.[34] In 1079 the emperor promoted Attaliates directly to magister without the intervening rank of vestarch, promoted his son, Theodore, to proconsul, and granted another chrysobull confirming the privileges given Attaliates in Michael VII's earlier chrysobull and extending them to his almshouse in Rhaedestus and his monastery in Constantinople.[35] Near the end of 1079 Attaliates completed his *History* with a laudatory dedication to Nicephorus III and a title mentioning the author's new rank of proedrus, evidently bestowed by Nicephorus.[36] Attaliates seems never to have continued his *History* further, despite his stated intention to do so. Perhaps he thought its fulsome praise for Nicephorus, which was out of place after Alexius I's accession, in 1081, had become too well known to be plausibly deleted or modified; or perhaps he was waiting to continue his *History* until he could celebrate Alexius' final victory over the Sicilian Normans, which occurred only in 1085. Attaliates probably died in his mid-fifties, between October 1084 and March 1085, because the inventories of items donated to his monastery refer to him as dead at the second date but not the first. By the latter date his son had also died.[37] His monastery is last attested in 1094.[38]

Attaliates tells us that he gave the property he inherited from his parents to his sisters and most of his first wife's property to the poor, while he donated most of his second wife's property to his monastery and almshouse.[39] His fortune must therefore have been based primarily on the salaries he received from the emperors whom he served. We can conjecture the approximate times when he held each of his ranks.[40] In the tenth century Liudprand of Cremona reports that a magister normally received twenty-four pounds of gold a year and a patrician twelve, and we can deduce from Byzantine and Arab sources that a protospatharius normally received six pounds of gold a year and a spatharocandidatus three.[41] These

[34] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 296–97; see above, pp. 272–73 and n. 6.

[35] Attaliates, *Diataxis*, pp. 109–23. The title at Attaliates, *History*, p. 3, refers to him as "magister, vestes, and judge," indicating that he had been promoted directly from vestes to magister without the intermediate rank of vestarch; note that Attaliates, *History*, p. 275, mentions Nicephorus' promoting officials several ranks at a time.

[36] Attaliates, *History*, p. 322; for the exact date, see below, p. 328.

[37] Attaliates, *Diataxis*, pp. 91 and 95 (October 1084) and 97, 125, and 127 (March 1085). Gautier, "Diataxis," pp. 14–15, however, believes that Attaliates died around 1080, because his *History* ends with Nicephorus III's second year, though he says he planned to continue it; but we should not expect a history to be brought up to date every year.

[38] See Lemerle, *Cinq études*, pp. 91–92 n. 49 and p. 98.

[39] Attaliates, *Diataxis*, pp. 19–29.

[40] His ranks, with approximate tenures, were probably spatharius (c. 1041–42), spatharocandidatus (c. 1042–57), protospatharius (c. 1057–59), consul (c. 1059–69), patrician (c. 1069–72), proconsul (c. 1072–78), vestes (c. 1078–79), magister (c. 1079–80), and proedrus (c. 1080–84).

[41] These were evidently the minimum salaries for those ranks, though some military officers with important commands received more than the minima. Cf. Treadgold, *Byzantine State Finances*, pp. 19–29 and 37–41, demonstrating that the different figures discussed by Lemerle, "Roga," are for salaries of "purely titular officials," not "the real officials who actually ran the government." The payroll figures calculated there are slightly revised in Treadgold, *Byzantium*, pp. 119–25.

numbers seem to show that each promotion in rank above spatharocandidatus corresponded to an increase in pay of three pounds of gold a year.[42] On this basis we can estimate that Attaliates had received almost a hundred pounds of gold in salaries by 1063, when he considered himself not yet rich, and by 1084 had received something over three hundred pounds (almost 23,000 nomismata).[43] The value of Attaliates' lands has been estimated from his foundation documents at around 150 pounds of gold.[44] Such sums were princely, even in a period when the nomisma gradually declined from virtual purity to only a third gold.[45] Attaliates' rise from modest beginnings in the provinces to real wealth in the capital goes far to explain his praise for imperial largess, which he tried to emulate by his own charitable donations. The promotions of officials that Psellus denounced as irresponsible and indiscriminate Attaliates considered to be generous and admirable.

Attaliates' *History* is a strange hybrid. Like Psellus, Attaliates sees a mixture of good and bad qualities in most of his contemporaries, though as a rule he criticizes them more sharply than Psellus does. On the other hand, Attaliates' panegyrical treatment of the nearly senile and spectacularly unsuccessful Nicephorus III outdoes even Psellus' encomia for the similarly incapable Michael VII. Naturally Attaliates puts most of his praise for Nicephorus Botaniates into the account of his rebellion and reign, but five laudatory references to Botaniates appear in the earlier part of the *History* as well, where they seem out of place.[46] One laudatory sentence has been so carelessly inserted into the text that Botaniates seems to be the subject of the next verb, though it must actually refer to Isaac Comnenus, the subject of the sentence before the insertion.[47] Later Attaliates claims that in 1067 Botaniates was the leading candidate to become emperor, then says almost immediately that "the whole people" prayed for Romanus Diogenes to become emperor, as he did at the beginning of 1068.[48] Evidently Attaliates returned to his text after Botaniates' accession and supplemented what he had already written

[42] Thus a spatharocandidatus received three pounds, a protospatharius six, a consul nine, a patrician twelve, a proconsul fifteen, a vestes eighteen, a vestarch twenty-one, a magister twenty-four, a proedrus twenty-seven, and a curopalates thirty. (A spatharius evidently received two pounds, though this rank disappeared during the last quarter of the eleventh century; see Oikonomidès, *Listes*, pp. 297–98.) The salary for each rank seems to have remained the same since the tenth century, because the frequent promotions of officials were evidently the government's method of raising their pay, while the steady debasement of the coinage was evidently the government's method of making the payments more affordable. Note that Attaliates, *History*, pp. 61 and 71, refers to Isaac I's actual demotion of some officials as unprecedented.

[43] The actual calculations come to 95 pounds (6,840 nomismata) by 1063 and 317 pounds (22,824 nomismata) by 1084. Note that a cow sold for about a nomisma, while 30 pounds (2,160 nomismata) was the price of the most magnificent palace in Constantinople recorded by Cheynet et al., "Prix," pp. 350 and 353–56.

[44] Lemerle, *Cinq études*, pp. 99–111.

[45] Grierson, *Catalogue* III.1, pp. 39–44; Morrisson, "Monnaie," p. 300, fig. 1.

[46] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 39–43, 56, 83–86, 96, and 97–98.

[47] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 55–56, where ἥπτετο must refer to Isaac.

[48] Cf. Attaliates, *History*, pp. 96 and 98–99.

with passages eulogizing the new emperor. By then Attaliates must have written at least the part of his history up to 1068.

Was Attaliates still writing at Botaniates' accession in 1079, or by that date had he already finished a first edition of his *History*, of which he then made a second edition to praise the new ruler? The best reason for thinking that Attaliates produced two versions of his *History* is that, quite exceptionally for Byzantine histories, it has two prefaces. The first is entitled "Dedication by Michael Attaliates, Magister, Vestes, and Judge, to the Emperor Botaniates." This preface lauds Nicephorus III for his generosity in promoting his officials, his patronage of learning, and his resemblance to God himself, offering the *History* as a sign of "the enthusiasm of my service and devotion." There follows the title of the whole work, *History Composed by Michael Attaliates, Proedrus* [and] *Judge of the Hippodrome and of the Velum*, with another preface. This second preface says nothing about Botaniates. Instead it emphasizes the value of history for providing examples of wise and virtuous behavior and declares Attaliates' composition to be "historical, and quite above all duplicity and special pleading, dealing with things that I did not find through hearsay and the tales of others, but in which I was involved myself as an auditor and witness."[49] Thus the first preface, which alludes to encomia by Gregory of Nazianzus, announces a panegyric of Nicephorus III, while the second, which shows similarities to the *Histories* of Agathias, announces an objective history.[50] Another discrepancy is that Attaliates calls himself only a magister and vestes in the first title, and mentions his grander rank of proedrus only in the second title.

These two prefaces and titles seem to belong to two different editions of the *History*. The first, panegyrical preface was evidently written for the second, panegyrical edition, of around 1079. The second, impartial preface is suitable only for the first, impartial edition of the *History*, which Attaliates left essentially unaltered except for adding his praise of Nicephorus III later. Apparently Attaliates received his rank of proedrus from Nicephorus as a reward for the second edition, then told his secretary to substitute the new rank in the book's title. The secretary followed his instructions, replacing Attaliates' earlier rank in the general title with the new rank

[49] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 7–8.

[50] Cf. Attaliates, *History*, p. 4 (ὑπόθεσις …περὶ λόγους … ὥσπερ τις ὀλυμπιονίκης … εἰς ἑνὸς κόσμου … συμπλήρωσιν), with Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations* XLIII.1 (ὑποθέσεις τῶν λόγων), XV.9 (ὥσπερ τις ὀλυμπιονίκης), and XXXVIII.10 (εἰς ἑνὸς κόσμου συμπλήρωσιν). These passages indicate that Attaliates, *History*, p. 8 (μὴ λήθης βυθοῖς διὰ τῆς τοῦ χρόνου παραρροῆς), is based on Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* XLIV.1 (μὴδε παραρρυῇ λήθης βυθοῖς), rather than Leo the Deacon, *History* I.1 (μὴ … τῆς λήθης βυθοῖς) and 92 (μὴ λήθης βυθοῖς παραρρυῇ), which Leo himself presumably based on Gregory of Nazianzus. Attaliates, *History*, p. 8, is clearly inspired by Agathias, *Histories* III.1.4 (note that Attaliates cites Agathias by name on p. 90), though the absence of literal borrowing indicates citation from memory. I owe these references to Gregory of Nazianzus to Anthony Kaldellis. Along with the parallels with Leo the Deacon, Pérez Martín's apparatus lists parallels with Diodorus I.1.1 and I.1.4 that seem inconclusive to me, though Attaliates may have vaguely remembered them.

of proedrus, but without altering the rank of magister in the title of the dedicatory preface, as he must have been meant to do.[51]

Attaliates' first edition was presumably finished before the accession of Nicephorus III, in 1079, and after the capture of Romanus IV, in 1071, which concludes the more objective part of the *History* based on the personal experiences mentioned by Attaliates in his second preface. The narrative before 1071 includes just two short passages that must have been written after the fall of Michael VII, both of which look like insertions and use similar language to accuse the Ducas family of "lying in ambush" for Romanus.[52] After 1071 Attaliates seems to have busied himself with his legal treatise until about 1073, when he appears not yet to have been a judge of the Hippodrome and the Velum, the office he mentions in the title of his *History* and in his monastic rules of 1077. After 1073 he had no apparent reason not to begin writing the first version of his *History*, which despite his complaints about distractions he probably finished around 1075.[53]

We know, however, that Attaliates remained a proconsul from the time he completed his judicial treatise, around 1073, until he founded his monastery, in 1077, and probably until the end of Michael VII's reign, in early 1078. The first edition of his *History* seems therefore not to have won him a promotion, as he surely hoped it would. We may guess the reason: Attaliates failed to praise Michael VII effusively enough, perhaps because the *History* ended with 1071, when Michael came to power. Around the same time Psellus, who knew Michael far better than Attaliates did, praised the emperor extravagantly in the second edition of his *Chronography*. While we cannot be sure of what Attaliates said about Michael in his first edition, because we have only the second edition, the admiration for Romanus IV and indignation at Michael's regime that Attaliates expresses in the version that we have may have made him reluctant to continue his original account beyond 1071. In fact, Michael's catastrophic reign was difficult to eulogize, a fact that Psellus sidestepped by praising him personally in general terms. Probably Attaliates expected to be rewarded simply for writing an accomplished work of scholarship, as he had been for his legal treatise, but if so he was disappointed. In his second edition he obviously decided not to repeat his mistake of being overly objective, and prepared a full-dress encomium of Nicephorus III. While the writer's real opinions were more or less irrelevant in an encomium, at least Attaliates' resentment of Michael VII's administration and his gratitude for Nicephorus' generosity seem genuine.

[51] The secretary was probably John the Praepositus, mentioned in 1084 at Attaliates, *Diataxis*, p. 91, as "the founder's secretary" (γραμ[ματικοῦ], which in the eleventh century had come to mean "secretary" rather than "schoolteacher"; see Kazhdan et al., *ODB* II, p. 866). In the first edition Attaliates' rank in the title of his *History* would have been proconsul, but he presumably changed this to magister in the second edition.

[52] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 101 (εἰπεῖν δὲ δεῖ καὶ ἐφέδρους) and 161–62 (ὡς δ' οἱ πληροφοροῦσιν ὅτι τῶν ἐφεδρευόντων αὐτῷ τις, … οἱ πλησιέστεροι λόχοι). We then need only a conjunction to introduce the next clause (εἷς καθένα κτλ).

[53] On these distractions see Attaliates, *History*, p. 8 (and n. 50 above for his borrowing from Agathias).

Attaliates never divided his *History* into books, although it was the sort of formal, classicizing history that the Byzantines often did divide into books. Only slightly shorter than Agathias' *Histories*, which had five books, Attaliates' *History* was considerably longer than Leo the Deacon's *History*, which had ten short books, and more than half as long as Psellus' *Chronography*, which had seven books. Another unusual feature of Attaliates' *History* is that it begins simply with the first events Attaliates could recall, not where an earlier history had left off. The reason for these anomalies may well be that Attaliates had read few recent histories, so that he knew of no history that he could continue and thought book divisions had never or seldom been used since the time of his model, Agathias' *Histories*. The case that Attaliates had read Psellus' *Chronography* when he wrote the first edition of his history is weak: the two men were evidently not friends, Psellus' work seems to have had a limited circulation, and a few vague similarities between their texts can easily be explained by their recording the same reigns and events and their discussing opinions that were common in the bureaucracy at the time.

If Attaliates had known about either edition of Psellus' *Chronography* when he prepared his first edition, around 1075, he would probably not have ventured to compete with the longer and better-informed account of the same period by a much more senior official much closer to Michael VII. Even if Attaliates had made such an attempt, he would probably have referred to Psellus' history in his preface and explained why he thought his own work was still needed. A clear verbal parallel can, however, be found between Psellus' second edition, of 1074, and Attaliates' second edition, of around 1079, just before they record the blinding of Romanus IV, in 1071, which Psellus approves and Attaliates deplores.[54] Apparently this reference to the *Chronography* marks the beginning of Attaliates' second edition, which he prepared after he had seen Psellus' second edition. We should not necessarily expect to find further parallels between the two historians, because after this Psellus writes little more than a generalized panegyric of the Ducas dynasty. Yet reading Psellus' laudatory treatment of Michael VII probably inspired Attaliates to adorn his second edition with similar praise for Nicephorus III.

After his two prefaces, Attaliates has both good and bad things to say about nearly all the main personalities in his *History*. He begins with a short summary of the reign of Michael IV (1034–41), whom he criticizes for recalling George Maniaces from Sicily but praises for defeating the Bulgarian rebels. The *History* really begins with a much longer account of the much shorter reign of Michael V (1041–42), who is praised for his justice but condemned for his attempt to exile his adoptive mother, Zoë. Attaliates evidently includes his own memories of the Easter parade in 1042, which became a bad omen when Michael began it too early,

[54] Cf. Psellus, *Chronography* VIIb.42 (Τὸ μὲν οὖν μέχρι τοῦδε εὔδρομος ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος κτλ), with Attaliates, *History*, pp. 167–68 (Μέχρι μὲν οὖν τούτων ἀσύγχυτος ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος κτλ). These passages are discussed by Krallis, *Michael*, pp. 82–83, who observes that Attaliates "evidently modeled his turn of phrase on the *Chronographia*'s"; but Krallis, without considering the possibility that Attaliates prepared two editions, assumes that he wrote all of his *History* after reading Psellus' *Chronography*.

and of the ensuing riots that overthrew Michael and put Zoë and Theodora in power. The historian praises Constantine IX (1042–55) for his generosity to officials and magnificent building program but criticizes his self-indulgence, rapacity, and dismissal of frontier troops in Armenia. Attaliates thinks that the rebel Leo Tornices showed both humanity and stupidity by not storming Constantinople in 1047. The historian praises the empress Theodora (1055–56) for choosing Leo Paraspondylus as her chief minister, then criticizes Paraspondylus and her other ministers for choosing Michael VI (1056–57) as her successor.

While considering the aged Michael VI incapable and sympathizing with Isaac Comnenus' revolt against him, Attaliates is impressed by Michael's willingness to abdicate rather than prolong the civil war and implies that the patriarch Michael Cerularius unscrupulously betrayed the emperor. The historian defends the measures of Isaac I (1057–59) to limit monastic property, criticizes Cerularius for exceeding his patriarchal prerogatives, criticizes Isaac for trying to depose the patriarch, then declares both that the patriarch's death was providential and that a miracle after his death proved his sanctity. Finally Attaliates forbears to give an opinion on whether the dampness seen in Isaac's tomb meant that God had saved Isaac or damned him. The historian approves of the liberality, mercy, and piety of Constantine X (1059–67) but attaches more importance to Constantine's parsimony and neglect of justice and the army. Attaliates attributes Byzantine defeats by the Turks to the emperor's faults but Byzantine victories over the Uzes to the emperor's virtues. Then he interprets the major earthquake of 1063 and the appearance of a great comet in 1066 as omens of disaster before Constantine's death.

With Constantine X's death, in 1067, Attaliates' coverage becomes about five times more extensive than before, if we compare the span of time described to the space devoted to it. First Attaliates records the disastrous incursions of the Turks that persuaded Constantine's widow, Eudocia (1067), to marry Romanus IV (1068–71) and to make him emperor, a decision that the historian endorses, emphasizing Romanus' distinguished bearing. Attaliates' eyewitness reports on Romanus' campaigns against the Turks are vivid and detailed, combining admiration with foreboding. The historian praises Romanus for greatly improving his long-neglected army and defeating the Turks in 1068, but criticizes him for failing to press on to take Aleppo when he could have done so. The next year the emperor defeated the Turks again, but Attaliates thought he should not have let them escape and temporarily persuaded him to pursue them. Attaliates says he also persuaded Romanus not to advance to the region of Melitene because it was already devastated. Instead of campaigning in person in 1070, the emperor sent out his general Manuel Comnenus, who was captured by the Turks but released.

Attaliates also accompanied Romanus' ill-fated campaign of 1071 against the Turks. He dwells on unfavorable omens, including the collapse of the emperor's tent and a fire in a house where the emperor lodged. Attaliates defends Romanus' decision to divide his army before attacking Manzikert but not the emperor's rashness in exposing himself to danger from the Turks, who abandoned the town, or his cruelty in cutting off the nose of a soldier who had stolen an ass. The troops were demoralized by an inauspicious Gospel reading and a night attack on their

camp by the Turks. In accepting negotiations with the Turks the emperor gave them a cross, which in retrospect seemed to mean giving them victory. Attaliates also disapproves of Romanus' decision to attack the Turks during the negotiations. The emperor pursued them till nightfall, then turned his battle flag as a signal that the army should return to camp; but many of his men took this as a sign that he had been killed, and a rout ensued. The Turks counterattacked and captured him. The Turkish sultan treated Romanus with respect and released him after concluding a treaty, as Attaliates learned before he left Trebizond for the capital. At this point the first edition of the *History*, which was prepared around 1075, appears to have ended.

When Attaliates prepared his second edition, around 1079, he evidently added the passages praising Nicephorus Botaniates and criticizing the Ducas family to what he had already written, then resumed his account with the civil war between Romanus IV and Michael VII. The historian sympathizes with Romanus but blames him for remaining inactive during the winter of 1071–72 in Cilicia and not confronting the imperial forces that defeated him there in the spring. Attaliates denounces Michael at length for having Romanus blinded and admires the blinded emperor's acceptance of his fate. The historian condemns Michael's chief minister, Nicephoritzes, for corruption and for displacing his admirable predecessor, John of Side. As the Turks overran Anatolia, the Norman mercenary Roussel rebelled, captured John Ducas, who was sent against him, and was himself captured with John by the Turks, though both were ransomed. Attaliates takes this occasion to lament how the fortunes and morals of the Romans had declined since ancient times. He goes on to decry the government's military incompetence, venality, injustice, and grain monopoly at Rhaedestus, and claims that rebels in Thrace demanded only that the evil Nicephoritzes be surrendered to them.[55] Amid dire portents, a famine raged in the capital that the government did nothing to relieve.

Next the historian adds a lengthy encomium of Nicephorus Botaniates, who rebelled at this time. After describing his noble appearance, Attaliates digresses at length on Nicephorus' ancestors, fantastically tracing them back for ninety-two generations through Nicephorus II Phocas and Constantine I to the Fabii and Scipiones of ancient Rome, appending accounts of Nicephorus Phocas' conquest of Crete and the exploits of Botaniates' father and grandfather under Basil II. The historian records the auspicious beginnings of Botaniates' rebellion, allegedly heralded by a miraculous fire in the sky. Attaliates, however, condemns the almost simultaneous revolt of Nicephorus Bryennius, who supposedly failed to take Constantinople because the people preferred Botaniates. When Botaniates arrived in the capital, in 1078, Attaliates expatiates enthusiastically on the lavish promotions and donatives the emperor gave to everyone. Bryennius, as foretold by the collapse of his tent and an eclipse of the moon, was defeated and blinded by Botaniates' forces. The new emperor frustrated a plot by his guardsmen and

[55] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 208–9.

sent armies that defeated two more rebels, Nicephorus Basilaces and Constantius Ducas. The *History* concludes with a description of the emperor's justice, mercy, and wisdom.

The first edition of the *History* seems to have been about half the length of the second edition, and in the whole work the years from 1041 to 1067 receive much less attention than the period from 1067 to 1079. Evidently Attaliates' first edition gave most prominence to the campaigns of Romanus IV, of which the historian had more relevant personal experience than of any earlier events. Despite knowing the emperor's tragic end and regarding it as a divine judgment, Attaliates shows great admiration for Romanus IV, which cannot have made the *History* welcome to Michael VII's senior officials, including Nicephoritzes. When Attaliates decided to continue his work, he naturally employed the same scale he had used for Romanus' reign, not the more concise treatment he had used for earlier events. He also wanted to voice criticisms of the condition of the empire—which he believed had begun to go wrong well before the reign of Michael VII—and of course to praise Nicephorus Botaniates. Probably the praise of Botaniates in the *History* was largely adapted from the panegyric of the emperor that Attaliates had already delivered, in the spring of 1078.[56]

Attaliates' *History*, except for its panegyric of Nicephorus III and condemnation of Nicephoritzes, shows a remarkably consistent ambivalence about the people it describes. Even Michael VII is partly excused because of his incompetence and Nicephoritzes' evil influence. All the other emperors, and most other leading figures, like Leo Tornices, Leo Paraspondylus, and Michael Cerularius, receive a combination of praise and blame. Thus we learn that the Norman mercenary Crispin was brave but perfidious, and that the Armenian general Philaretus Brachamius was a fine warrior but a rascal.[57] Attaliates, who held the conventional Byzantine opinion that whatever happened was a punishment or reward from God, took the unconventional but coherent position that an emperor who did both good and bad things was sometimes rewarded and sometimes punished by events. Of course the whole population benefited or suffered in consequence, but it was the emperor's acts that mainly determined the fortunes of the empire, "just as [we attribute] to the drivers of the chariots and not to the horses the results [that come] from them."[58] This comparison is apt, because races in the Hippodrome were primarily decided by the skill of the charioteers in managing their teams of four horses, not by the swiftness of the individual animals.

According to Attaliates, however, God rewarded or punished emperors for moral or immoral behavior, and not necessarily for prudent or imprudent administration. The historian realized that emperors could make strategic as well as moral errors, but in practice he tends to confuse the two. For example, he condemns

56 See above, p. 315 and n. 33.

57 Attaliates, *History*, pp. 124–25 (Crispin) and 132 (Philaretus), though at p. 301 (in the second edition) Philaretus' faults are passed over when he makes his submission to Nicephorus III.

58 Attaliates, *History*, pp. 86–87; cf. pp. 108 and 119, where Attaliates makes the same point, attributing the success or failure of Romanus IV's campaigns to the emperor.

Constantine IX for leaving Armenia defenseless against the Turks by disbanding the Armenian themes, but ascribes this mistake to Constantine's greed—that is, to his desire to save money.[59] On the other hand, Attaliates seems to have been nearly blind to the need to balance the state budget, disdaining the efforts of Michael VII, Nicephoritzes, and Michael of Nicomedia (probably Psellus) to economize, and lauding the profligate spending of Nicephorus III on civilians at a time of desperate military need. While the historian acknowledges that some emperors before Nicephorus deserved credit for their generosity, he insists that Nicephorus outdid them all and that his merits were all the greater because during his reign the treasury was severely depleted.[60]

Attaliates' comparison of the decadent Byzantine Christians of his day to the virtuous Roman pagans of antiquity has occasioned modern comments.[61] Attaliates understood, perhaps better than most of his contemporaries, that the empire had suffered devastating and probably irreparable military harm in the 1070's. As an historian, he also insisted on the value of history for providing lessons during the current crisis.[62] To him Byzantium was still the Roman empire, which had never before sunk so low. He knew enough history to conclude that the early empire, ruled first by dubious Julio-Claudian emperors and then by emperors who persecuted Christians, was not a suitable model for emulation. He had read about the Roman Republic, and knew that even later pagans praised its civic virtues, which had been crowned by military success. He had himself benefited greatly from imperial generosity, and he had seen, on campaign with Romanus IV if not before, that past emperors' parsimony had damaged the Byzantine army. Attaliates accordingly decided that "unjust greed, which is hateful to God," was the main cause of the empire's downfall.[63] Except for describing Nicephorus III's supposed ancestors, he in fact says little about the men of the Roman Republic except that they were virtuous "because of their natural magnanimity."[64] For Attaliates the ancient Romans served mainly as an example to shame contemporaries who thought that the empire needed to economize.

Otherwise Attaliates was a conventionally pious Christian, who began his rules for his monastery and almshouse by recalling that his parents had raised him in the Christian faith.[65] He thanks God for saving his life during one of Romanus IV's campaigns, when he slipped from his horse just before it fell off a cliff.[66] He praises Nicephorus III for "rendering unto God the things that are God's," because regardless of the state's need for revenue Nicephorus returned profitable docks at Constantinople to church institutions and other owners from whom Michael

[59] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 44–45 (to which pp. 78–79 evidently refers); cf. Treadgold, *Byzantium*, pp. 80–85 and 215–19.

[60] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 281–82.

[61] See Kaldellis, "Byzantine Argument."

[62] Attaliates, *History*, p. 194.

[63] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 196–97.

[64] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 194–95 (τῇ φυσικῇ μεγαλοφροσύνῃ).

[65] Attaliates, *Diataxis*, pp. 17–19.

[66] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 120–21.

VII had confiscated them. Others may have thought that Christ's words justified rendering the profits from the docks unto Caesar in a time of crisis, as Attaliates had himself endorsed Isaac I's earlier confiscations of church property.[67] Yet by the time of his second edition Attaliates had become the founder of a church institution and wanted to see church property respected. Like most Byzantines, Attaliates believed that omens were signs from God, and he reports a large number of them. He insists that God causes earthquakes even if they come about by physical means, though Agathias, whom he cites for his description of an earthquake under Justinian, was inclined to disagree.[68]

Agathias, the only historian whom Attaliates cites by name, evidently influenced his literary style, with generally infelicitous effects. Though Attaliates' style is somewhat less affected than Agathias', like Agathias he sometimes describes contemporary practices as if he expected his work to be read by Athenians from the time of Thucydides. Thus he explains that Sunday is "the first day of the week, which the most Christian host knows as the Lord's day because of the Resurrection of our Lord," and Christmas is "the day of the birthday feast of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."[69] Attaliates' text is full of ornamental archaisms like "the city of Byzas" for Constantinople, "Myrmidons" for Russians, and "Ausones" for Romans (that is, Byzantines).[70] These archaisms are, however, used inconsistently and sometimes confusingly, since both Hungarians and Germans are called "Sauromati," and Turks are called "Nephthalite Huns," "Persians," and "Scythians," as well as "Turks."[71]

Attaliates' classical references are frequent, but his classical quotations are rare, with one each from Homer, Hesiod, and a dramatist identified as a "comic poet" who appears actually to have been Euripides.[72] Besides the digressions on the ancient Romans and Nicephorus III's ancestors, the *History* includes shorter digressions describing the elephant and giraffe of Constantine IX and the causes of lightning.[73] Attaliates invents no lengthy set speeches. Although he includes a short oration addressed by Nicephorus III to the blinded rebel Nicephorus Bryennius, this speech seems not to be invented by Attaliates but excerpted from another source, because it refers to an oracle that the *History* never mentions.[74]

[67] cf. Attaliates, *History*, pp. 61–62 (on Isaac I) and 277–79 (on Nicephorus III), referring of course to Mark 12.17 and Luke 20.25.

[68] Cf. Attaliates, *History*, pp. 87–91 (citing Agathias on p. 90), with Agathias, *Histories* V.3–8.

[69] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 20 and 29–30.

[70] E.g., Attaliates, *History*, pp. 20 (city of Byzas), 31 (Ausones), and 87 (Myrmidons); for Ausones, cf. the anonymous verses quoted by Agathias, *Histories* II.10.8.

[71] E.g., Attaliates, *History*, pp. 43 (Nephthalite Huns), 66 (Hungarian "Sauromati"), 105 (Persians), 133 (Turks), 142 (Scythians), and 146–47 (German "Sauromati").

[72] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 99 (the "comic poet"), 133–34 (Hesiod), and 219 (Homer, clearly a borrowed quotation).

[73] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 48–50 (the elephant and giraffe) and 310–11 (lightning).

[74] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 292–93, observing after the quotation that the speech included "many other things." At the end of the quotation, the emperor rebukes the rebel for not realizing that the N in the oracle was "only single and not double." The relevant oracle is quoted

The source may have been the full text of the emperor's actual speech, or the full text of Attaliates' panegyric of 1078.

Aside from Agathias' *Histories*, the sources of Attaliates' *History* have yet to be securely determined. Our main problem is to identify the sources of the second edition. To say that a source of the second edition was probably Attaliates' oration of 1078 in praise of Nicephorus III simply raises the question of what the sources of that oration had been. In his description of Nicephorus' alleged ancestors from Republican Rome, Attaliates vaguely mentions "a certain ancient book" as his source for the Fabii, then refers a little later, just as vaguely, to "ancient histories." The intervening description shows approximate parallels with Appian, Polybius, Diodorus, and Plutarch.[75] The same source or sources probably supplied Attaliates with background material for his digression on the virtues of the ancient Romans. This problem may never be definitively solved, because Attaliates may well have consulted a lost source or lost parts of sources. Perhaps the most likely hypothesis is that he drew on excerpts from an historian (or historians) in one of the many parts of the Constantinian *Historical Excerpts* that are now lost.

Nothing in the *Historical Excerpts* could, however, have been Attaliates' source for Nicephorus Phocas' conquest of Crete, or for the exploits of Nicephorus Botaniates' father and grandfather under Basil II. Here Attaliates cites "the tales of men of old" but also observes that he has included material "not recorded by most historians," a phrase that appears somewhat suspicious.[76] These parts of Attaliates' *History* include much information corroborated by surviving histories, including those of Leo the Deacon or John Scylitzes, but also material that as Attaliates says is not to be found in any of them. Though he may have consulted the lost history of Theodore of Side and its lost continuation by Theodore of Sebastea, Attaliates may also have used oral sources (which after more than fifty years cannot have been very reliable) or his imagination (which was allowable by the very permissive standards of panegyrics). Some if not all of the information that appears only in Attaliates' *History* is presumably correct.

For the main subject of the *History*, events after 1041, Attaliates should have had access to good sources to supplement his own memory. While we have seen that by the time he wrote his second edition he had probably read Psellus' *Chronography*, he had little to learn from it about the years after 1071 and seems not to have used it for earlier years. He must, however, have had well-placed friends who could supply him with their recollections of events and with some official records. In our text he leaves a blank for Isaac I's age at his death, showing that he expected to find a source that could give the missing information, and

only by Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.17.15: "There will be a time when N will come before M." This must have meant that N[icephorus III] would overcome M[ichael VII] but implied that N[icephorus Bryennius] would not come later (since the Greek alphabet has only one N).

[75] See Attaliates, *History*, pp. 218–222, especially pp. 218 (διὰ βίβλου τινὸς παλαιᾶς) and 222 (ἐν παλαιαῖς ἱστορίαις), with Pérez Martín 's apparatus and notes.

[76] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 223–37, especially pp. 223 (τὰ … τῶν ἄνωθεν διηγήματα) and 229 (τοῖς πολλοῖς συγγραφεῦσιν ἀδιεξόδευτα).

though in this case he never found such a source, in other cases he presumably did add facts that he looked up in records.[77]

Despite his experience on Romanus IV's campaigns, Attaliates had little knowledge of military matters. In particular, he paid little attention to the sizes of armies and had hardly any notion of what plausible numbers for them might be. He records that Nicephorus Botaniates was captured in 1064 by a horde of 600,000 Uzes (an absurd exaggeration obviously meant to exculpate Botaniates), then that 150 Byzantines defeated these Uzes. Somewhat more plausibly, Attaliates reports that in 1075 Roussel's 2,700 Normans were defeated by 100,000 Turks, whom they had believed to be 6,000.[78] He correctly records the length of the reign of each emperor in years and months, except that he omits the lengths of the reigns of Zoë and Theodora together, of Eudocia, and of Romanus IV.

Attaliates' reference to the ninety-two generations (2,760 years?) of Botaniates' family inspires little confidence in his chronology.[79] His *History* includes one date by the year of the world and eleven dates by indictions, two of them wrong. Neither wrong date seems to be merely miscopied, because one, putting the appearance of Halley's Comet in May 1065 rather than 1066, is confirmed by the continuation of the history of John Scylitzes, which largely copies Attaliates, while the other, putting the proclamation of Nicephorus III on July 2, 1078, seems to be elaborately described as the longest day of the year.[80] July 2, 1078, however, is impossible, because Zonaras, who also used Attaliates' *History*, puts Nicephorus' coronation on April 3, 1078, a date compatible with Attaliates' narrative, and Scylitzes' continuation puts Nicephorus' original proclamation, in Anatolia, in October 1077.[81] Quite possibly the reference is actually to a premature proclamation of Nicephorus in St. Sophia that Attaliates dates to the day after Epiphany, or January 7, 1078.[82] The historian would then have meant that Epiphany, because of the manifestation of Christ as God and the passing of the winter solstice, was "when the sun, as the Morning Star, driving forward the equinoctial cycle, renders the terrestrial world purer and brighter, reveals to men the greatest and most gracious day overflowing with benefits, and fills the whole world with immense

[77] Attaliates, *History*, p. 69.

[78] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 83–86 and 189–90.

[79] Attaliates, *History*, p. 217.

[80] Attaliates, *History*, pp. 22 (Sept. 14 of 1st indiction [1047], Leo Tornices revolts), 59 (Sept. 1 of 11th indiction [1057], Isaac I takes power), 83 (beginning of 3rd indiction [Sept. 1064], Uzes cross Danube), 87–88 (Sept. 23 of 2nd indiction [1063], earthquake at Constantinople), 91–92 (May of 4th indiction [1065, mistake for 1066], Halley's Comet appears; cf. *Scylitzes Continuatus* p. 117.6), 101 (Jan. 1 of 6th indiction [1068], Romanus IV takes power), 114 (Nov. 20 of 7th indiction [1068], Romanus defeats the Turks near Hierapolis), 138 (end of A.M. 6578 and 8th indiction [Aug. 1070], Romanus returns to Constantinople), 215 (July 2 of 1st indiction [1078, mistake], Nicephorus III is proclaimed), 267 (March 1 of 1st indiction [1078], Nicephorus sends troops to Constantinople), and 310 (Oct. 1[?] of 3rd indiction [1079], lightning strikes the Column of Constantine).

[81] See Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.19.1, dating the coronation to Tuesday of Holy Week; cf. *Scylitzes Continuatus* p. 172.5–6.

[82] Attaliates, *History*, p. 256.

favors." This description is so obscure that a confused copyist may well have thought that it referred to the summer solstice, and accordingly altered an original date of January 7 to July 2.[83]

The last dated event in Attaliates' *History* occurred "when October [of 1079] had just begun."[84] In the final sentence of the work, Attaliates says that he has recorded events "until the second year of [Nicephorus III's] reign" and plans to write more later.[85] The second year of Nicephorus' reign would have begun in April (or January?) of 1079 and ended in April (or January?) of 1080. The *History* never mentions Nicephorus' scandalous marriage to Maria of Alania, whose husband Michael VII was still alive (even if he had become a monk). While this marriage cannot be dated precisely, it must have occurred before January 1080, when the emperor issued a chrysobull confirming in vague and general terms the decision of a synod of 1066 against "unlawful marriages."[86] This chrysobull appears to be an attempt to mollify the outraged ecclesiastical authorities soon after the wedding.[87] Though Attaliates may possibly have omitted the marriage because he was reluctant to depict it in a favorable light, as a rule his praise for Nicephorus is so shameless that the *History* seems more likely to have been finished in October or November of 1079, just before the wedding, which should perhaps be dated to December. Attaliates may even have tried to avoid the subject by hurrying to finish his work when he learned that the marriage was imminent. The rest of Nicephorus' reign was so brief and inglorious that even Attaliates would have seen little point in writing a continuation before the emperor's abdication, in April 1081.

Attaliates' *History* inevitably suffers by comparison with Psellus' brilliant *Chronography*, a better-written, better-informed, more interesting, and more intelligent history of almost precisely the same events. Yet by any fair standard Attaliates' work is itself well written, well informed, interesting, and intelligent. As even Byzantines would have seen, the panegyric of Nicephorus III in Attaliates' second edition is inappropriate to the historical genre and fits badly with the objectivity of the earlier part of the narrative. The same is true, however, of the panegyric of Michael VII in Psellus' second edition, which may well have inspired the effusive praise in Attaliates' second edition. In any case, both panegyrics affect only fractions of the two histories. The two historians differ from each other in diagnosing the empire's tribulations, which Psellus attributed largely to the emperors' extravagance and Attaliates largely to their parsimony. That difference, however, is less significant than it may appear, because according to both historians the emperors overspent on unnecessary items and economized on necessary ones.

[83] If so, at Attaliates, *History*, p. 215, we should emend δευτέραν ... τοῦ Ἰουλίου μηνὸς to ἕβδομαν ... τοῦ Ἰανουαρίου μηνὸς. The suggestion of Polemis, "Notes," p. 71, that we should emend to June 2 (the Feast of St. Nicephorus) seems unlikely, because it cannot explain the reference to the sun.

[84] Attaliates, *History*, p. 310.

[85] Attaliates, *History*, p. 322.

[86] For the chrysobull, see *PG* 127, cols. 1481–84.

[87] See Leib, "Nicéphore," p. 135 and n. 1.

Both Attaliates and Psellus denounce corruption, inefficiency, and inadequate military spending, which were in fact important causes of the catastrophe that befell the eleventh-century empire. The historians' main disagreement was over the effects of increases in the size and salaries of the bureaucracy, which must have been a relatively small part of the overall budget until the empire's severe financial straits in the 1070's. Both historians ignored and evidently misunderstood the debasement of the gold coinage, which greatly reduced the real increases in bureaucrats' salaries and deprived the army of the pay and resources it needed. Both historians lacked much military experience or strategic insight. Both cared most about their own careers in the civil service, which thrived while the empire foundered. That these two capable and thoughtful senior officials had such a poor grasp of the crisis in their times helps to show how that crisis came about. Yet the appearance of two fine histories within these few terrible years remains a sign of the health of Byzantine historiography, which the emperors fostered by their liberality to bureaucrats.

John Scylitzes

Because as usual most of what we know about John Scylitzes appears in his own writings, and in his case those writings are almost all derived from the writings of others, we know very little about him.[88] George Cedrenus and John Zonaras, both of whom used his work, call Scylitzes a Thracesian, implying that he was born in the Thracesian Theme in western Anatolia. His birthplace was probably a small town, or he would have been known by the name of his city rather than his province. Though the name Scylitzes ("Little Dog") tells us that his family was important enough to have a surname, the family must nonetheless have been fairly obscure, because the only other Scylitzae known to us lived in the twelfth century and later, when they had distinguished careers in the Church and bureaucracy. Probably they were the historian's descendants and made their way with the help of connections that he had made.

In his preface to his *Synopsis of Histories*, which ends with 1057, Scylitzes mentions including "whatever we have learned by word of mouth from old men" but not what he recalled himself.[89] On the other hand, in the continuation that he seems to have added to his history later, he felt able to revise what he found in his written source (Michael Attaliates' *History*) to give somewhat different views of the emperors beginning with Isaac I Comnenus (1057–59). Admittedly, Scylitzes' more favorable opinion of Isaac may have been designed to please Isaac's nephew Alexius I, who was emperor when Scylitzes wrote. Yet Scylitzes also added a phrase to Attaliates' criticism of the judicial verdicts of Constantine X Ducas (1059–67),

[88] On Scylitzes, see Seibt, "Ioannes," Holmes, *Basil II*, pp. 66–239, and "Rhetorical Structures," Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* III, pp. 239–91, Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 389–93, Cheynet, "Introduction," Flusin, "Re-writing History," *PBW*, Ioannes 110, and now Kiapidou, *Σύνοψη*.

[89] Scylitzes, p. 4.49.

noting that Constantine showed himself "harsh to the magnates and unbearable."[90] This sounds as if Scylitzes, who ended his career at the top of the judiciary in Constantinople, was already a judge in the capital, or at least a lawyer, under Constantine.

We may therefore conjecture that Scylitzes was born around 1040, reached an age to have opinions about politics between 1057 and 1059, and soon afterward began his judicial career. Despite his reservations about Constantine X, Scylitzes was probably one of the many new men whom that emperor promoted.[91] By 1090 Scylitzes held the high rank of proedrus and the high judicial offices of prefect of Constantinople and drungary of the Watch. In 1091 and 1092 he is again attested as drungary of the Watch, with the even higher rank of curopalates. Given the upheaval in imperial administration that followed the accession of Alexius I, in 1081, Scylitzes had probably become prefect and drungary no earlier than that year. His tenure as drungary of the Watch cannot have extended past 1094, when another man held that office.[92] By 1094 Scylitzes seems to have retired voluntarily from the judiciary, because Alexius evidently went on to promote him further. In citing Scylitzes' work, George Cedrenus assigns him the still more exalted rank of protovestiarius, which was usually reserved for the imperial family.[93]

Since the titles of both versions of Scylitzes' history refer to its author as "curopalates and former grand drungary of the Watch," but not as protovestiarius, Scylitzes presumably became a protovestiarius after completing both editions. In some of our manuscripts his history stops with 1057, and this was the version used by Cedrenus; but a majority of our manuscripts include a continuation to 1079, and this supplemented version was used by Zonaras. Since almost all of his *Synopsis of Histories* and most of the continuation are copied by Scylitzes from other writers, we should not expect to find many verbal parallels between the two texts. Yet two characteristic phrases appear both in the part of the *Synopsis* that was apparently summarized from John the Monk and in parts of the continuation not taken from Attaliates, as if Scylitzes had borrowed them from John's history

[90] Cf. *Scylitzes Continuatus*, pp. 103–4 and 112.16 (βαρὺς δεικνύμενος τοῖς δυνατοῖς καὶ ἀφόρητος), with Attaliates, *History*, pp. 60 and 77. See also Kazhdan, *Studies*, pp. 23–86, especially 33–47, referring to "the Continuator of Scylitzes" whom I (though not Kazhdan, *Studies*, p. 33 n. 17) would identify with Scylitzes himself.

[91] Psellus, *Chronography* VIIa.15; Attaliates, *History*, p. 71.

[92] See *PBW*, Nikolaos 104 (Nicholas Mermentulus, drungary of the Watch in 1094).

[93] Cedrenus I, p. 5. Seibt, "Ioannes," pp. 83–84, proposes emending Cedrenus' πρωτοβεστιάριος to πρωτοβέστης or πρωτοβεστάρχης on the ground that protovestiarius was too high a rank for Scylitzes to have held, and supposes that protovestes was Scylitzes' rank at the time he wrote his *Synopsis*, well before he became proedrus (Seibt suggests protoproedrus) and drungary of the Watch. Yet this interpretation depends on three unnecessary conjectures: that our title of the *Synopsis* is anachronistic even in its first version when it calls Scylitzes curopalates and former drungary of the Watch, that Cedrenus found a different and older version of the work's title than ours, and that Cedrenus' text was then corrupted. Holmes, *Basil II*, pp. 84–89, plausibly defends the reading πρωτοβεστιάριος in Cedrenus' text and a date after 1092 for the *Synopsis*.

for use in his own work.[94] The conclusion that the continuation was written by Scylitzes himself, as its manuscripts imply, seems to be confirmed by Zonaras, who attributes to "the Thracesian" the account of Isaac I's death, in 1060, that appears in the continuation.[95] Thus Scylitzes, like Symeon the Logothete, Psellus, and Attaliates, apparently produced a second edition of his history that included a continuation.

Scylitzes seems to have compiled his original *Synopsis* after he retired as drungary between 1092 and 1094, when he was in his fifties and had leisure to devote to historical research after retiring as drungary of the Watch. Since his continuation is missing from a number of our manuscripts, he must have added it only after the version ending with 1057 had already been copied and distributed. Though the title of the version with the continuation claims that it concludes with Alexius I's proclamation, in 1081, the narrative actually ends, like Attaliates' *History*, around 1079.[96] Yet Scylitzes' continuation incidentally refers to the accession of Constantine Bodin as ruler of Dioclea and observes that he "completed his reign in our own times."[97] The far from conclusive evidence indicates that Bodin's accession occurred sometime between 1081 and 1085, probably around 1082, and Bodin's death sometime between 1085 and 1108, probably around 1101.[98] Therefore the continuation seems to have been completed after 1101. It was certainly finished well before 1118, because it formed part of a manuscript copied in that year by the Bulgarian bishop Michael of Diabolis.[99]

Given that Scylitzes appears to have compiled even the first version of his work after 1092–94, why did he originally stop with 1057 before continuing his work to 1079? In his preface to the original version he lists the contemporary histories written since Theophanes and omits the history of Attaliates, which was to be the main source for the continuation and could have been used in the original *Synopsis* for events as early as 1041. The most likely explanation seems to be that when Scylitzes compiled his original *Synopsis* he was unaware of Attaliates' *History*,

[94] Cf. Scylitzes, pp. 408.57 (Ἡράκλειος ἆθλος) and 484.38 (δεικνύων ἔργα ἀπαίτει μισθοὺς), with *Scylitzes Continuatus*, pp. 110.19 (ἆθλος Ἡράκλειος) and 121.16 (δεικνύων ἔργα ἀπαίτει μισθούς), neither of which appears in Attaliates' *History*. (Both passages are noted by Kiapidou, "Πατριότητα," p. 334, despite her reservations about Scylitzes' authorship.) If another writer had composed the continuation, he would probably not have studied Scylitzes' *Synopsis* with enough care to recall these phrases.

[95] Cf. Zonaras XVIII.7.5–7, with *Scylitzes Continuatus*, p. 108. This argument is, however, not absolutely conclusive, because if we are willing to disregard the attribution to Scylitzes of the history that includes the continuation in our MSS, we could also suppose that Zonaras found such a MS and mistakenly assumed from it that Scylitzes had written the whole history.

[96] See Scylitzes, apparatus to p. 3.3 (MS O: τελευτῶσα ἐς τὴν ἀναγόρευσιν Ἀλεξίου τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ).

[97] *Scylitzes Continuatus*, pp. 165–66.

[98] Fine, *Early Medieval Balkans*, pp. 220–24 and 228–30. Anna Comnena VII.8.9 says that John Ducas served as duke of Dyrrhachium for eleven years, apparently from 1083 to 1093 (see below, p. 371 and n. 146), when he defeated and captured Bodin; but Comnena VIII.7.2 puts Bodin back in Dioclea in 1094.

[99] See the preface to Thurn's edition of Scylitzes, p. xxvi.

just as he was unaware of Psellus' *Chronography* (though he knew and criticized Psellus' *Concise History*). Since Scylitzes saw himself primarily as a summarizer of the histories of others, he stopped with 1057 because that was the concluding date of the latest history known to him, the work of John the Monk. Later Scylitzes discovered both Attaliates' *History* and Psellus' *Chronography*, and decided to use them to continue what he had already written. Perhaps someone brought those two histories to his attention after he circulated his original *Synopsis*. In any case, in view of Scylitzes' apparent age, the continuation was probably finished not very long after the original *Synopsis*. We may conjecturally date the *Synopsis* around 1095 and the continuation around 1105.

We may sum up Scylitzes' biography as follows. He was born around 1040 in the Thracesian Theme, probably into the provincial nobility in a small town. He evidently came in his teens to Constantinople, where he acquired a good secondary and legal education. He seems to have been appointed a judge in the capital soon after the accession of Constantine X, in 1059, becoming like Attaliates one of the many civil officials repeatedly promoted during the eleventh century. Scylitzes was, however, more successful than his fellow provincial and judge, because Attaliates became a proedrus only at the end of his career. After Alexius I became emperor, in 1081, Scylitzes reached the summit of his profession, becoming not only a proedrus but prefect of Constantinople and drungary of the Watch by 1090 and a curopalates by 1091. Around 1093 he seemingly retired and devoted himself to writing history, first compiling his *Synopsis* from 811 to 1057, then continuing his work to 1079. After he finished the continuation, around 1105, Alexius I promoted him to protovestiarius, perhaps as a reward for his accomplishments as an historian. Then we hear no more of him.

Scylitzes entitled his work *Synopsis of Histories* in its first version and *Epitome of History* in its second.[100] He begins his preface by expressing admiration for George Syncellus and Theophanes Confessor, and observing that thus far no one had superseded their general histories. Scylitzes comments that some writers had attempted the task but failed because they included only abbreviated and inaccurate accounts of each imperial reign. He gives just two examples of such failed historians: Psellus and "the Sicilian schoolteacher," who was probably Theognostus the Grammarian. Here Scylitzes must mean not Psellus' detailed and generally accurate *Chronography* but his *Concise History*, which does indeed give only brief and often incorrect information about the emperors it covers. All we know for certain of Theognostus' lost history is that it provided detailed coverage of part of the reign of Michael II (820–29); but to judge from Scylitzes' preface it began with a series of very brief accounts of emperors like those in Psellus' *Concise History*. Scylitzes seems not to have noticed that Theognostus devoted the last part of his work to much more thorough treatment of the reigns of Leo V and Michael II.[101] Scylitzes implies that he knew of other general histories that he considered too

[100] Scylitzes, p. 3.1(Σύνοψις ἱστορίων) and apparatus to p. 3.3 (MS O: Ἐπιτομὴ ἱστορίας).
[101] See above, pp. 80–81 and 88–89.

concise, perhaps including the chronicles of Symeon the Logothete and George the Monk, whose treatment of early history is more superficial than those of George Syncellus and Theophanes.

Next Scylitzes turns to another group of historians who wrote after Theophanes: not world historians, but "those who have composed lengthy histories of the events of their own times and a little earlier."[102] He goes on to accuse these writers of various kinds of bias. As we have seen, he lists ten of them in what he apparently thought was their chronological order, though his list reverses the actual chronological positions of Theodore Daphnopates and Nicetas the Paphlagonian.[103] Scylitzes seems to have believed that the first historian in his list, Theodore Daphnopates, was the author not only of the *Life of Basil* but of all of *Theophanes Continuatus*, including the account of the years from 876 to 944 that modern editors have called "Book VI,", though it was actually taken from the second edition of the chronicle of Symeon the Logothete, whom Scylitzes never mentions. For his *Synopsis*, Scylitzes appears to have summarized a manuscript much like one that has reached us, which contains Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus*, the *Life of Basil*, and "Book VI" from Symeon.[104] From "Book VI" Scylitzes also learned about Manuel the Protospatharius' history, which he cannot have seen himself.[105] Scylitzes certainly knew Genesius' *On Imperial Reigns*, which he not only mentions but used to supplement his summary of Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus*.[106]

Apparently Scylitzes knew and summarized the lost history of Nicephorus the Deacon of Phrygia, which extended from 944 to 971. Nicephorus' preface was most likely Scylitzes' source for the facts that Theodore Daphnopates had written Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus* and the *Life of Basil*, that Genesius' Christian name was Joseph, and that Nicetas the Paphlagonian had written a history.[107] In fact, Nicephorus' preface may well have been the source of Scylitzes' implied criticism of Daphnopates for favoring Basil I, of Nicetas for condemning Photius, and of Genesius for praising Constantine Maniaces; otherwise Scylitzes would probably not have known that Daphnopates wrote the *Life of Basil*, that Nicetas condemned Photius, or that Maniaces was Genesius' ancestor.[108] The mistake that Daphnopates wrote "Book VI" of *Theophanes Continuatus* was presumably made by Scylitzes, not by Nicephorus, who was a contemporary of the real author, Symeon the Logothete, and seems not to have known Symeon's history.[109] If Nicephorus had identified Daphnopates as the author of historical books that continued Theophanes and that praised Basil I, Scylitzes could reasonably have concluded that Daphnopates had also written the last part of the historical narrative found in the same manuscript.

[102] Scylitzes, p. 4.35–36 (coming after the list of historians, but clearly referring back to it).
[103] See above, pp. 234–35.
[104] *Vaticanus graecus* 167. See above, p. 195 and n. 148.
[105] See above, pp. 197–99.
[106] See above, p. 181 n. 104.
[107] See above, pp. 234–35 and n. 38.
[108] See above, pp. 139 (Nicetas), 176–77 (Daphnopates), and 181–82 and 186–87 (Maniaces).
[109] See above, pp. 234–35 and n. 38.

Probably Scylitzes had seen Leo the Deacon's *History* himself, because he knew that it existed and that Leo was an "Asian," though Scylitzes' source for these facts could also have been the preface of the lost history of Theodore of Sebastea. Yet if Scylitzes had seen Leo's *History*, he either had no copy on hand when he wrote or preferred to summarize the history of Nicephorus the Deacon, which covered roughly the same period in comparable detail.[110] Scylitzes seems to have made use of Theodore of Side's history only for the few years between the end of Nicephorus' history, in 971, and the beginning of Theodore of Sebastea's history, in 976, an interval poorly covered in all our Byzantine histories. For the years from 976 to 1025, Scylitzes apparently relied on Theodore of Sebastea, who was the continuer of Theodore of Side and the only Byzantine historian known to have dealt with that period.[111] Scylitzes probably knew the history of Demetrius of Cyzicus only from the summary and continuation of it by John the Monk of Lydia, which Scylitzes summarized for the years from 1025 to 1057.[112] Though all of this reconstruction is of course hypothetical, it explains the known facts.

Thus Scylitzes evidently knew and epitomized the histories of Theodore Daphnopates, Genesius, Nicephorus the Deacon, Theodore of Side, Theodore of Sebastea, and John the Monk, and had probably seen the *History* of Leo the Deacon. Evidently Scylitzes knew of the histories of Nicetas the Paphlagonian, Manuel the Protospatharius, and Demetrius of Cyzicus only from references in other historians. If Scylitzes had as much as glanced at the histories of Nicetas or Manuel, he would surely have realized that Nicetas had written a world chronicle, not a contemporary history, and that Manuel had written a comprehensive history, not a biography of John Curcuas.[113] Scylitzes may possibly have found Demetrius' history but preferred to use John the Monk's work, which covered the same material and more. That Scylitzes made no use of Demetrius' history seems clear from his recording Demetrius' plot against the patriarch Alexius only in an account that was hostile to Demetrius and presumably came from John the Monk.[114] We need not take the criticisms of earlier historians in Scylitzes' preface too seriously, especially when he seems to have borrowed them from Nicephorus the Deacon. Even in modern prefaces a writer customarily explains the need for his work by citing the defects of his predecessors and hardly ever admits that what he has written has already been done better by somebody else.

The list in Scylitzes' preface, however, leaves out several contemporary historians who had written later than Theophanes. Without counting minor historians and writers who might not be considered historians at all, Scylitzes' list omits Sergius Confessor, the unknown author of the History of Basil I and Leo VI, Psellus' *Chronography*, and Attaliates. Presumably Scylitzes omitted these four historians because he was unaware of their works, since he included Manuel, Nicetas, and

110 See above, p. 239 and n. 58.
111 See above, pp. 247–58.
112 See above, pp. 258–62.
113 See above, pp. 139 and 197–99.
114 See above, pp. 258–59.

Demetrius despite not having read them. Including those three, at first Scylitzes failed to find and read at least seven histories that could have contributed to his own, though later he found Attaliates' *History* and Psellus' *Chronography*. When Scylitzes wrote, Attaliates' *History* and Psellus' *Chronography* were quite recent, and as works addressed to emperors had presumably been added to the imperial library. Demetrius' history was also fairly recent, and quite possibly dedicated to Constantine IX. Although Sergius Confessor's history was rare, a fragment of it survives today, and Pseudo-Symeon used somewhat more of it than we have now.[115] Pseudo-Symeon and Daphnopates used Nicetas the Paphlagonian's *Secret History*, and Symeon himself used Manuel's history and the History of Basil and Leo. Since Daphnopates, Symeon, and Pseudo-Symeon all seem to have been commissioned to write by eleventh-century emperors, they should have had access to the imperial library and found most or all of their sources there, and their histories were presumably deposited in the imperial library in their turn.

One would expect a retired official who ranked as high as Scylitzes to have had access to the imperial library when he decided to write a history. The possibility of occasional damage to the imperial library's holdings can hardly explain his not finding Psellus' *Chronography* or Attaliates' *History* at first but finding both of them later—nor for that matter Daphnopates' finding Nicetas' *Secret History* but not the History of Basil and Leo, or Symeon's finding the History of Basil and Leo but not Nicetas' *Secret History*. The most likely explanation is that all of these writers did use the imperial library but that the library was by modern standards poorly organized. Though no doubt it had some sort of inventory, this would have resembled other surviving Byzantine manuscript inventories: a list in no particular order with very brief descriptions of the contents of the manuscripts, which was often incomplete for manuscripts containing several different works.[116] While a librarian could have offered some assistance, his knowledge of the collection would also have had limits. Navigating the other libraries in Constantinople would have been even more complicated. Finding the books relevant to any subject therefore depended on the diligence and luck of the researcher. Since even today, with incomparably better guides to scholarly literature, nearly all scholars overlook some relevant recent scholarship, we should be indulgent of the lapses of Scylitzes, who at least made an effort to be comprehensive.

Scylitzes intended to produce not a bare chronicle like Psellus' *Concise History*, nor an incomplete and tendentious account like the *Life of Basil* or Genesius' *On Imperial Reigns*, but a balanced general history that would continue up to

[115] See above, pp. 94–98.

[116] For a list of such catalogues with short descriptions of them, see Bompaire, "Catalogues." See also Wilson, "Libraries," especially pp. 289–91 (on the monastery of the Great Lavra on Mt. Athos: "No principle of order can be observed. …") and 292–93 (on the monastery of St. John on Patmos: "Apart from this division into categories [parchment and paper MSS], it looks as if the books were not kept in any fixed positions, and when the monks made the inventory they probably went through the books as they happened to be on the shelves at the time.").

present times the similarly balanced general histories of George Syncellus and Theophanes. Scylitzes seems to have attempted to follow what he thought had been Theophanes' method of summarizing sources, although he realized that like George Syncellus he lacked the information needed to arrange all of his account in chronological entries. Otherwise Scylitzes had several contemporary sources that gave him the information he needed to cover his chosen period. Because he concluded the first version of his history before the reign of the first emperor related to the current dynasty of the Comneni, Scylitzes had no obvious motive to add or copy any unmerited praise of the emperors or any undeserved criticism of their enemies. To him his task probably seemed straightforward: to summarize one source after another in order, deleting the bias and leaving just the facts. His readers could then read a single history instead of ten or more, without being distracted by the prejudices typical of contemporary writers.

Since Scylitzes transmitted most of the contents and much of the wording of his sources that survive today, his *Synopsis* is less a synopsis than a paraphrase with a little rearrangement and explanation. Including the material that he added from Genesius, Scylitzes' treatment of the years from 811 to 886 is about two-thirds as long as Books I–IV of *Theophanes Continuatus* and the *Life of Basil*, and most of what is omitted is mere verbiage. Scylitzes' treatment of the years from 886 to 945 is practically as long as the corresponding part of the second edition of Symeon the Logothete's chronicle, which is relatively concise. Scylitzes' main additions to his sources seem to be conjectural or fanciful identifications of historical figures, most of which are evidently wrong. For instance, Scylitzes identifies the otherwise unidentified teacher of Leo the Philosopher in the early ninth century as "Michael Psellus," as if the eleventh-century philosopher had had an homonymous ancestor.[117]

Scylitzes also makes a few mistakes in summarizing or trying to clarify his sources. He says that in 803 Bardanes Turcus was "domestic of the Scholae of the East," a position created only a century and a half later. The historian says that Michael the Amorian threatened to make an "unholy marriage" with Leo V's wife, evidently because Scylitzes misread Genesius' report that Michael accused Leo of having made an unholy marriage himself. The historian claims that the caliph Ma'mūn offered the emperor Theophilus ten thousand pounds of gold for a visit from Leo the Philosopher, though this sum appears as two thousand pounds in Scylitzes' source, Book IV of *Theophanes Continuatus*. Later Scylitzes dates the death of the patriarch Nicholas Mysticus in 925 to the third indiction, miscopying Symeon the Logothete's correct date of the thirteenth indiction.[118] As a rule, however, Scylitzes transmits the substance of his sources accurately.[119]

117 See Polemis, "Some Cases," with pp. 80–81 on "Michael Psellus" (Scylitzes, p. 105.86).

118 Scylitzes, pp. 9.93 (Bardanes Turcus; cf. Treadgold, *Byzantium*, pp. 34 and 78–79), 19. 19–23 (Michael the Amorian; cf. Genesius I.17 and Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 198–99 and 223–24), 104.65 (Ma'mūn; cf. *Theophanes Continuatus* IV.27), and 221.78 (Nicholas Mysticus; cf. Symeon in *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, p. 410, and Symeon I, 136.40).

119 Although he may be mistaken that Michael I was exiled to the island of Prote rather than the nearby island of Plate, this is far from clear; see above, p. 189 and n. 133.

After 945, when we no longer have Scylitzes' sources to compare with his *Synopsis*, we can probably still assume that he transmits much the largest part of their contents and much of their style. We have seen that he appears to preserve such features of his sources as Nicephorus the Deacon's bias in favor of John Tzimisces, Demetrius of Cyzicus' annalistic dating, and John the Monk's frequent use of the dual number.[120] Without being able to consult the original texts, we cannot be sure whether Scylitzes reproduced almost all of a concise source, as he did with Symeon the Logothete's chronicle, or omitted large but superfluous parts of a verbose source, as he did with the *Life of Basil*; in either case, however, he presumably passed on most of the material of historical interest, with relatively few errors.[121] Thus the part of Scylitzes' *Synopsis* from 944 to 971 should preserve most of the history of Nicephorus the Deacon; the part from 976 to 1025 should preserve most of the history of Theodore of Sebastea; and the part from 1025 to 1057 should preserve most of the history of John the Monk. The part of Scylitzes' history from 972 to 976 may well preserve almost all of that short section of the history of Theodore of Side.

Very little of the *Synopsis* seems to be by Scylitzes himself, except for the omissions, the rearrangement, and the usually worthless identifications. He repeats most of the judgments of his sources unless he considers them controversial.[122] He omits the most extravagant praise of Basil I in the *Life of Basil*, and probably a few of the least important details of ecclesiastical politics in the history of Theodore of Sebastea.[123] The apparently self-confident criticisms of previous authors in his preface seem to be largely borrowed from Nicephorus the Deacon. Though one might have expected such a senior official as Scylitzes to have the knowledge and confidence to comment on past events, the evidence that he did so in the *Synopsis* is scanty and ambiguous. Even two references in the first person singular appear to be copied from Nicephorus the Deacon, because in his preface Scylitzes refers to himself in the first person plural.[124] Similarly, a comment in the first person singular on the disastrous effects of Constantine IX's economies seems more likely to belong to John the Monk than to Scylitzes himself, even though those effects were more evident in Scylitzes' time than they had been in John's.[125] The *Synopsis of Histories* is what its title indicates, and in no significant sense an independent historical work.

[120] See above, pp. 228–32 (Nicephorus on Tzimisces), 258 and n. 131 (Demetrius' dating as transmitted by John the Monk), and 265 and n. 165 (John the Monk's use of the dual).

[121] Though Scylitzes, p. 253.33, may possibly have made the mistake that Romanus II reigned for thirteen years instead of three, this would be such a glaring error that Scylitzes' text should probably be emended from τρισκαίδεκα to τρία.

[122] Thus modern attempts to find overall themes in Scylitzes' *Synopsis* generally arrive at propositions that were shared by almost all Byzantines, such as that God rewarded good emperors and punished bad ones (found by Sklavos, "Moralising History"), or that women were not well suited to ruling (found by Strugnell, "Representation").

[123] Note that Scylitzes entirely omits the eulogistic chapter 72 of the *Life of Basil*; see above, p. 174 n. 78. For Scylitzes' treatment of Theodore of Sebastea, see above, pp. 247 and n. 96 and 252 and n. 108.

[124] Cf. Scylitzes, pp. 4.40–50 (ἡμεῖς ... εὕρομεν ... ἐδιδάχθημεν ... καταλελοίπαμεν), with 281. 49 (οὐκ ἔχω λέγειν) and 303.73 (φράζειν οὐκ ἔχω). See also above, pp. 230–31 and n. 23.

[125] Scylitzes, p. 476.55–59 (λέξω).

Scylitzes asserted himself somewhat more in preparing what modern scholars have called *Scylitzes Continuatus*, the continuation from 1057 to 1079 that he added to the *Synopsis* to make a second edition of his work with the new title *Epitome of History*.[126] Quite possibly he took the opportunity to make a few additions to his original *Synopsis*, because four of our manuscripts that include passages not in the original *Synopsis* also include the continuation.[127] Given that Scylitzes must have been a government official during the whole period of the continuation, he followed Michael Attaliates' *History* surprisingly closely, not even venturing to record the accession of Alexius I, in 1081, which Attaliates had not mentioned because it had not yet happened when he wrote. Instead, without much regard for chronological order, Scylitzes ends his continuation with the death of the logothete Nicephoritzes, in 1078. Since Scylitzes adds relatively little of his own and omits Attaliates' long passages in praise of Nicephorus III and his ancestors, the continuation is slightly less than half as long as the corresponding part of Attaliates' *History*. Yet sometimes Scylitzes does insert his own opinions or information into Attaliates' narrative, and once he apparently cites Psellus' *Chronography*.

Scylitzes' continuation refers to Psellus as "Constantine Psellus," "Psellus," or "the Consul of the Philosophers" in four passages, none of them paralleled in Attaliates' *History*. First, Scylitzes observes that Romanus IV failed to campaign against the Turks in 1070 because he was persuaded by the ill-intentioned advice of Psellus, of another adviser, and especially of the Caesar John Ducas. Second, Scylitzes says that Psellus took the leading role in Romanus' deposition in 1071, "as he boasts himself in one of his own writings," evidently meaning the *Chronography*. Third, Scylitzes asserts that by his influence Psellus had rendered his pupil Michael VII "unfit and worthless for every sort of action." Finally Scylitzes concludes that Michael VII, "being deceived and misled by the Consul of the Philosophers, ruined the whole world, one might say."[128] Since Psellus' *Chronography* remains an important historical source even if all these assertions are true, Scylitzes seems to have avoided using it because he disliked its author so much. While Psellus could reasonably be criticized for undermining Romanus IV and indulging Michael VII, we may still suspect that Scylitzes had some personal motive for disliking his fellow official.[129]

[126] On *Scylitzes Continuatus*, see Tsolakis, *Συνέχεια*, pp. 23–99, Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* III, pp. 307–20 (both accepting Scylitzes' authorship of the continuation), Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 391–93 (considering Scylitzes' authorship highly probable), Kazhdan, *Studies*, pp. 33–82 (rejecting Scylitzes' authorship), and Kiapidou, "Πατριότητα" (expressing reservations about Scylitzes' authorship).

[127] See above, pp. 252–53 and n. 110, and the preface to Thurn's edition of Scylitzes, pp. xx–xxvi (noting that MSS AUVB include the continuation) and xxix (noting that MSS ACEOUV$_2$B include interpolations). Probably some of the so-called interpolations are by Scylitzes while others are not; but the whole question needs further study.

[128] *Scylitzes Continuatus*, pp. 141, 152 (cf. Psellus, *Chronography* VIIb.27), 156, and 171.

[129] Perhaps when Psellus served briefly as chief minister in 1081 one of the men he persuaded Nicephorus III not to promote was Scylitzes; cf. Attaliates, *History*, pp. 296–97

Except for Attaliates' panegyric of Nicephorus III, Scylitzes copies most of Attaliates' opinions, which were themselves not very favorable to Psellus. In comparison with Attaliates, Scylitzes is somewhat more sympathetic to Isaac I, slightly more unfavorable to Constantine X, about as favorable to Romanus IV, and even more unsympathetic to Michael VII. Yet both historians generally favor Isaac and Romanus and disapprove of Constantine and Michael, and both condemn Nicephoritzes without denying that he was adept at political intrigue. No doubt Scylitzes understood that Attaliates' hyperbolic praise for Nicephorus III was insincere, and Scylitzes' own moderately positive view of Nicephorus may have been much the same as Attaliates' real opinion. Although Scylitzes is less critical of Nicephorus Bryennius than Attaliates is, Attaliates had to criticize Bryennius as a rival of the reigning emperor, Nicephorus III, whereas Scylitzes wrote his continuation after the reigning emperor, Alexius I, had married his daughter Anna to Bryennius' grandson. All the views expressed by Attaliates, Scylitzes, or both seem to have been fairly common among the bureaucracy. Most of these judgments also seem justifiable today, except that contemporary officials probably liked Nicephorus III more than he deserved because he rewarded many of them so lavishly.

Scylitzes should be judged as what he claimed to be, an epitomator of previous histories rather than an original historian with independent opinions. Even his somewhat misleading and partly borrowed preface presents him as a writer who conscientiously excised the biases of other historians without asserting his own views. Though he underestimated the difficulty of writing an authoritative literary history, he was a fairly accurate summarizer who chose his sources reasonably well. The result may be considered more or less authoritative, because the sources of so much of it are lost, but as a literary work the *Synopsis* and its continuation cannot be counted a great success by either Byzantine or modern standards. The composition is highly uneven, as Scylitzes lurches from one source to another without any unifying point of view, distinctive style, or consistent method of summarizing. Yet like all historians he was largely at the mercy of his sources, and at least he preserved most of what he found in them with minimal distortion of their historical evidence or even of their literary qualities. In his continuation, he also added some more evidence, if not much more perspective. Given the limited task Scylitzes set for himself, the fact that his views were conventional was probably more a strength than a weakness.

George Cedrenus

An even more shadowy personality and writer than John Scylitzes, George Cedrenus was scarcely more than a copyist.[130] In fact, Cedrenus may have done

(referring to "Michael of Nicomedia"), a passage that may have been omitted from *Scylitzes Continuatus* to avoid reminding contemporaries of Scylitzes' grievance. Given Scylitzes' dislike for Psellus, this omission would otherwise be difficult to explain (unless, of course, "Michael of Nicomedia" was not Psellus; see above, pp. 272–73 and n. 6).

[130] On Cedrenus, a largely neglected author, see Markopoulos, "Χρονογραφία," pp. 27–29 (following the apparently baseless conjecture of G. Xylander that Cedrenus was a monk;

little more than select two earlier histories and commission a secretary to copy them one after the other. We may even be tempted to omit him from the roster of Byzantine historians, as most scholars would now omit Leo Grammaticus and Theodosius Melissenus, who copied Symeon the Logothete's chronicle under their own names, or the unknown writer who appended part of Symeon's chronicle to the chronicle of George the Monk. On the other hand, most Byzantine historians copied more than they composed, including Symeon the Logothete, George the Monk, and Theophanes. Since today Cedrenus' *Compendium of Histories* survives in more manuscripts than any Byzantine history before him except the *Concise Chronography* of Nicephorus and the chronicle of George the Monk, his very popularity should give him a modest place among Byzantine historians, even if others soon became more popular.

The title of Cedrenus' work refers to him simply as Lord George Cedrenus, while his preface largely copies Scylitzes' preface, adding a reference to Scylitzes as "the protovestiarius John the Thracesian." An anonymous poem in a late manuscript of Cedrenus' work, probably written by Cedrenus himself, identifies him as a native of Cedrus who held the rank of proedrus.[131] The poem plausibly explains the derivation of the name Cedrenus from the village of Cedrus, or Cedrea, in the Anatolic Theme, which must have fallen to the Turks in the 1070's.[132] We have three seals of members of the Cedrenus family, all dated by the usual stylistic criteria to the middle to late eleventh century, which may be a bit too early. One seal, of "George Cedrenus, vestarch," probably belonged to our historian before his promotion to the higher rank of proedrus.[133] The two other seals belonged to a higher-ranking "John Cedrenus, protocuropalates and duke," who could have been George's brother.[134] Cedrus was such an insignificant place that the two Cedreni were almost certainly relatives. Like Michael Attaliates, from Attalia, they seem to have lacked a family name until they adopted one from their birthplace, probably when they arrived in Constantinople to seek their fortunes.

Although George knew and copied only the first edition of Scylitzes' *Synopsis*, he evidently wrote after Scylitzes had been promoted to protovestiarius, a rank that Scylitzes attained only after the second edition of his history appeared, around 1105. We can gather nothing about Cedrenus' rank at the time he compiled his

see the preface to Bekker's edition of Cedrenus I, p. xii), Schweinburg, "Ursprüngliche Form," Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 393–94, and Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* III, pp. 331–41. Kokoszko, "Imperial Portraits," and Maisano, "Note," both treat Cedrenus as if he were an original researcher, Maisano without as much as mentioning Pseudo-Symeon. John Burke, Roger Scott, and Paul Tuffin are now working on an annotated translation of Cedrenus' history that should advance our knowledge considerably. (See p. 341 n. 136 below.)

[131] Edited in de Boor, "Weiteres zur Chronik," p. 426, and Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* III, p. 332.

[132] Belke and Mersich, *Phrygien*, pp. 297–99.

[133] *PBW*, Georgios 20202.

[134] *PBW*, Ioannes 20693. If all three seals are of roughly the same date, the two men were probably of the same generation, though they could also have been cousins.

history from the vague reference to him as "lord" in the history's title. If the date of his seal is even approximately correct, he seems to have worked not long after 1105. We would probably not go far wrong if we guessed that Cedrenus was born around 1050 into a family of prosperous landholders at Cedrus, came to Constantinople for his education before the Turks overran his family's lands, in the 1070's, rose in the bureaucracy to the ranks of vestarch and proedrus, and compiled his history around 1115, quite possibly in retirement, like Scylitzes.

Since Cedrenus was unaware of the second edition of Scylitzes' history, he cannot have been a close friend of Scylitzes or worked with his permission or knowledge. Cedrenus might not have ventured to copy Scylitzes' work under his own name if his predecessor had still been alive; but Scylitzes may well have been dead by 1115. Presumably expecting that some readers would know about Scylitzes' work, Cedrenus does acknowledge it by name in his preface, though he claims that he consulted more books on the earlier period than seems to have been the case.[135] Because any former senior official like Cedrenus had the money to hire a secretary even if the emperor had not assigned him one, the labor Cedrenus expended on his history may not have been excessive, though of course we cannot be sure how much he did himself. We also cannot know whether he was rewarded for his work, or when he died.

Cedrenus was astute enough to see that the main drawback of Scylitzes' *Synopsis of Histories* was its failure to cover the times before 811. Although Scylitzes himself expected those who were interested in the earlier period to consult the chronicles of George Syncellus and Theophanes, many readers would have welcomed the convenience of following all of world history in one work rather than in three different works that could be hard to find in one place. Recognizing that the lengthy chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon was wide-ranging and interesting, and probably difficult to find, Cedrenus had the clever idea of combining the portion of Pseudo-Symeon before 811 with Scylitzes' *Synopsis*. Since we lack an adequate edition of Cedrenus or any edition of almost all the relevant part of Pseudo-Symeon, we cannot be sure how much Cedrenus added to the works of Pseudo-Symeon and Scylitzes from other sources. Cedrenus does seem to have adapted or abridged some of what he found in his main sources. Although we know that he included some information not found in our lone manuscript of Pseudo-Symeon, Cedrenus may have had a better manuscript of Pseudo-Symeon than we do.[136] Cedrenus' *Compendium* eventually became somewhat more popular than Scylitzes' *Synopsis*, presumably because it was more comprehensive.

During the fifty-odd years that separate the first edition of Psellus' highly original *Chronography* and Cedrenus' not at all original *Compendium*, four writers produced histories, two of them in two editions each. All of them are generally

[135] Cedrenus I, pp. 5–6.

[136] For an example of information in Cedrenus that is not in Pseudo-Symeon, see Treadgold, "Indirectly Preserved Source," especially pp. 71–72. Roger Scott (see pp. 339–40 n. 130 above) has informed me that his team's findings indicate Cedrenus adapted, abridged, and supplemented his sources more than has usually been assumed.

derivative works, except for the *History* of Michael Attaliates, which found the fewest readers by far. Including partial copies, today we have twenty-one manuscripts of Xiphilinus' *Epitome of Dio*, thirty-two manuscripts of the two editions of Scylitzes' history, forty manuscripts of Cedrenus' history, and just four manuscripts of Attaliates' history. Similarly, we have many more manuscripts of the derivative chronicles of George the Monk and Theophanes than we have of the contemporary histories of Leo the Deacon and Psellus, and seven of the ten contemporary histories listed by Scylitzes in his preface are lost to us in their original form. While the number of Byzantines who read history appears to have grown during the eleventh century, those readers continued to prefer composite accounts of earlier times to narratives of contemporary events.

No doubt one of the reasons for such a preference was habit, and another was the natural tendency of busy men to choose to read one or two books that offered a general knowledge of history rather than histories of relatively short periods. Another factor was probably that most of the events of Byzantine history for three-quarters of a century after the death of Basil II made for relatively dull or discouraging reading. Psellus and Attaliates offered panegyrics of the pathetic emperors Michael VII and Nicephorus III along with some discussion of what had gone wrong in the course of the eleventh century; but the exaggerated virtues and dreary faults of emperors who had reigned briefly in the past were of little interest to most readers. Since most readers of history were government officials, few were eager to hear about the failures of recent officials, some of whom were their own ancestors. Although after the earlier part of the reign of Alexius I Comnenus the empire's fortunes began to improve, only the next generation of historians recorded Alexius' successes. The Comnenian recovery must have looked more impressive to that generation than to older men like Attaliates, Scylitzes, and Cedrenus, who could remember what the empire had been like before the 1070's.

10
Nicephorus Bryennius and Anna Comnena

The momentous reign of Alexius I Comnenus (1081–1118) was a promising subject for a dramatic narrative. Alexius left the empire larger, richer, and stronger than it had been at his accession, even if smaller, poorer, and weaker than it had been ten years before his accession. At the worst of the military emergency, early in Alexius' reign, Byzantium had been in real danger of complete disintegration; but Alexius recovered almost everything that the empire had lost in the Balkans, as well as the most fertile and populous part of Anatolia. He also restored the stability of the Byzantine coinage, though not its full purity, and under him the Byzantine economy recovered from the disruptions caused by the Seljuk and Norman invasions. Since the mid-eleventh century, when the empire had enjoyed clear dominance over the eastern Mediterranean, it had acquired some troublesome new neighbors—the Seljuk sultanate in Anatolia, the Crusader states in Syria and Palestine, and the Norman state in Sicily and southern Italy—but none of these was as strong as Alexius' Byzantium. Better still, the empire remained stable, strong, and prosperous during the long reigns of Alexius' son and grandson. While Alexius might have done more—especially by increasing the size of the army and retaking the rest of Anatolia—he achieved a great deal.

We have seen that writers and readers of history had grown more numerous during the late eleventh century, and that John Scylitzes and probably George Cedrenus wrote under Alexius himself. According to his daughter Anna, Alexius refused to let his wife, Irene, commission a history of his reign, which he regarded as a succession of ordeals that were painful to remember.[1] As far as we know, after Cedrenus no history of any sort appeared until twenty-odd years after Alexius' death, and even then the first historian was Alexius' own son-in-law Nicephorus Bryennius, whose history is unfinished and never found a wide readership. One might have expected some enterprising bureaucrat to have sought the favor of John II Comnenus (1118–43) by composing a history of the emperor's father, but apparently none did.[2] While chance was always a factor in the production

[1] Comnena XV.11.1.

[2] Since for this period we lack a list of contemporary historians comparable to the one in Scylitzes' preface, a history may conceivably have been written that attracted little notice at

of Byzantine histories, one reason for the absence of an early history of Alexius' reign may be that the Comneni increasingly reserved the highest state offices for their relatives, or at least for aristocrats and generals like themselves.[3] As a result, bureaucrats of modest origins, the sort of men who had become historians earlier, may not have cared to write a history of a dynasty that had done little for them and might not reward their efforts. On the other hand, two histories about Alexius that were composed by members of the imperial family are of high quality.

Nicephorus Bryennius

The Caesar Nicephorus Bryennius was no bureaucrat, and his origins were far from modest.[4] He was the highest-ranking Byzantine historian up to his time, unless we count the emperor Constantine VII, who was more an editor than an author. The Bryennius family were prominent aristocrats, with estates in Thrace, around Adrianople. The historian's great-grandfather was a distinguished general who defeated the Pechenegs and fought the Seljuk Turks under Constantine IX, then was blinded for premature support of the generals' revolt that made Isaac Comnenus emperor.[5] The historian's grandfather was another distinguished general, Nicephorus Bryennius, who did good service at the battle of Manzikert, in 1071, served as duke of Bulgaria and of Dyrrhachium during Michael VII's reign, reportedly almost became Caesar, and finally rebelled, in 1077.[6] The next year the young Alexius Comnenus defeated him on the orders of Nicephorus III, who had Bryennius blinded but returned his property after temporarily confiscating it. The blinded rebel probably supported Alexius Comnenus when he proclaimed himself emperor, at Adrianople, in 1081. After Alexius took power, he treated Bryennius as an ally and adviser and apparently made his son duke of Dyrrhachium.[7] This son, whose Christian name may have been John, was the father of the historian Nicephorus Bryennius, who was born around 1083 and named for his grandfather according to Byzantine custom.[8]

the time and has left us no trace; but this possibility seems remote in view of our relatively ample documentation for the twelfth century.

[3] See below, p. 376 and n. 164.

[4] On Bryennius, see Neville, *Heroes* (using modern gender theory and ideology to interpret ideas held by Bryennius that seem to me quite conventional for a Byzantine aristocrat), Gautier, *Nicéphore*, pp. 11–51, Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* III, pp. 357–70, Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 394–400, E. Jeffreys, "Nikephoros," Seger, *Byzantinische Historiker* (still useful for Bryennius' style), Skoulatos, *Personnages*, pp. 224–32, and *PBW*, Nikephoros 117.

[5] Gautier, *Nicéphore*, pp. 14–16, and *PBW*, Anonymus 195.

[6] Gautier, *Nicéphore*, pp. 16–20, Skoulatos, *Personnages*, pp. 218–24, and *PBW*, Nikephoros 62; but see p. 350 and n. 39 below.

[7] For the son, see Gautier, *Nicéphore*, pp. 20–23, and *PBW*, Anonymus 61. He was scarcely more than a child in 1077 (Bryennius III.1; cf. Gautier, *Nicéphore*, p. 228 n. 2). We would probably know more about him if his son had continued his history past 1080.

[8] While some have maintained that the historian was the son rather than the grandson of the rebel, this requires preferring a probably corrupt reading in Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.22.23

Alexius, pursuing his practice of connecting his new dynasty with other influential aristocratic families, married his eldest child, Anna Comnena, to young Nicephorus Bryennius, probably in 1096.[9] She was then about twelve and Nicephorus about fourteen, the earliest ages when the canons allowed girls and boys to marry.[10] Though by the time of her marriage Anna's younger brother John had been born and crowned as Alexius' heir, the position of the emperor's eldest son-in-law was still politically important. Nicephorus lived in the palace throughout Alexius' reign. Anna, who hoped to exercise power through her husband, praises his intelligence, education, agility, charm, and handsome and imposing appearance. Her favorable opinion seems to have been widely shared, though others imply that Nicephorus was rather better at hunting and warfare than at scholarship and less learned than his wife.[11] In any case, for a Byzantine aristocrat any real learning was much more unusual than proficiency at hunting or fighting. His mother-in-law, Irene Ducaena, who was devoted to her daughter Anna, came to prefer her son-in-law to her own son John. The couple had three sons and two daughters, and named a son and a daughter Alexius and Irene, after Anna's parents.[12]

Alexius too seems to have liked Nicephorus. The emperor awarded him the high rank of panhypersebastus at the time of his marriage and later appointed him to the still higher rank of Caesar. In 1097, soon after his marriage to Anna, Alexius had Bryennius conduct a military demonstration to impress the Crusaders encamped outside Constantinople.[13] Bryennius accompanied Alexius on a campaign against the Normans in 1108, when the young man negotiated successfully with the Norman prince Bohemund. The Caesar was also present on a campaign against the Pechenegs in 1115, when he helped Alexius convert Bogomil heretics.[14] Yet, perhaps because the emperor knew that his wife and daughter wanted his son-in-law to succeed him, he gave Nicephorus no significant military duties

(for Νικηφόρου read Νικηφόρον with MS E) to the testimony of the historian's own wife (Comnena VII.2.6) and ignoring other clear indications of his age (see n. 10 below). See especially Reinsch, "Historiker."

[9] Nicephorus is first mentioned as Alexius' son-in-law on April 2, 1097 (Holy Thursday; Comnena X.9.5–6). According to the canons Anna could not have married before December 2, 1095, when she turned twelve.

[10] Though the usual assumption has been that Nicephorus was born c. 1080, c. 1082 seems a slightly better approximation, because Tornices, *Eulogy* pp. 257.3 (for Darrouzès' conjecture καίσαρος read παιδὸς with the MS and Reinsch, "Historiker," p. 424) and 263.10 calls him, like Anna, a "child" at the time of their marriage, while Comnena XV.5.3 refers to his "inexperience and youth" even in 1116.

[11] Comnena, preface 3.1 and 4.1, and VII.2.6; cf. Theodore Prodromus in Gautier, *Nicéphore*, pp. 347–49, Michael Italicus in Gautier, *Nicéphore*, pp. 371–77 (= Italicus, *Letters* 14, 16, and 17), Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 5, Tornices, *Eulogy* pp. 253–55 (implying Nicephorus was a better hunter than scholar), and Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.26.15 (implying Anna was more learned than Nicephorus).

[12] See *PBW*, Anna 62.

[13] Comnena X.9. 6.

[14] Comnena XIII.11.2 and XIV.8.9.

until 1116, when in his early thirties he held a subordinate command against the Seljuk Turks.[15] Even then, conscious of his lack of experience, he hesitated to take the initiative.[16] Bryennius appears to have been a rather unassuming and indecisive man who tried to please everyone at a time when the imperial family and court were bitterly divided among themselves.

As Alexius lay dying, in 1118, his wife kept insisting that he disinherit their son John in favor of Bryennius, whom she called better qualified to rule. She also urged the Caesar to seize power for himself, and John was certainly worried that Nicephorus might do so. Bryennius had the support not just of his powerful mother and wife but of many courtiers. In the end, however, whether out of weakness or prudence, he let John become emperor. The next year Anna and other courtiers, though not the dowager empress Irene, conspired to assassinate John and replace him with Nicephorus. Although the Caesar allowed this plot to go forward, at the last minute he refused to commit himself to it, forcing the plotters to abandon it. John did nothing to punish Bryennius, who had probably saved the young emperor's life, but confiscated the property of the other conspirators and left Anna in disgrace. The Caesar seems to have learned from his late father-in-law how to frustrate the demands of an overbearing wife by passive resistance.[17]

Despite the acrimony of these family disputes, most of the relatives soon became more or less reconciled with one another. The empress Irene, having refused to join the plot to murder her son, was again on good terms with her son-in-law. Since after twice declining to become emperor the Caesar was no longer a plausible pretender, he was in favor with John II and accompanied him on several campaigns. With the help of Irene, around 1122 Nicephorus and Anna arranged a double wedding for their sons Alexius and John with appropriate brides.[18] Without becoming a nun, Anna retired to quarters attached to her mother's convent, where Bryennius probably resided himself.[19] She tells us that besides his history, and probably before it, Nicephorus "composed other writings that are memorable and noteworthy," but these seem not to have been historical and must be lost today.[20] At some point the dowager empress Irene commissioned Nicephorus to write a history of the rise and reign of her late husband Alexius, which he had forbidden her to order during his lifetime.[21] Bryennius completed part of the text before late 1138, when he died after returning mortally ill from a campaign with John II in Cilicia. Nicephorus was in his mid-fifties, and Irene had

[15] For Alexius' resistance to his wife's ambitions for Nicephorus, see Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 5–6. The references to Nicephorus' responsibilities up to 1116 are conveniently collected in *PBW*, Nikephoros 117.

[16] Comnena XV.5.3.

[17] See below, p. 359 and n. 98.

[18] Tornices, *Encomium* p. 273; Theodore Prodromus in Gautier, *Nicéphore* pp. 341–54 and 357–59 (= Prodromus, *Poems* 39.36–59).

[19] See below, p. 360 and n. 102.

[20] Comnena, preface 3.2; see below, p. 353 and n. 60.

[21] See above, p. 343 and n. 1.

died earlier the same year.[22] Nicephorus' widow, Anna, professing to be distraught at the deaths of her mother and husband, decided to continue their unfinished project in her *Alexiad*.

Nicephorus Bryennius' history has reached us only in a transcription of one lost manuscript and in another manuscript containing a short excerpt "on the Turks, from the first book of the history of the Caesar Bryennius."[23] Our text is essentially complete but, except in the excerpt, often corrupt. The first page of our lost manuscript was already missing when it was transcribed, but it presumably included a title and perhaps revealed why the history is preceded by an explanatory introduction, apparently by someone other than Nicephorus, that defends Alexius I's right to the throne.[24] In a short preface that follows this introduction, Nicephorus appears to supply the missing title: "Let the name of [my] work be *Material for History*." Evidently addressed to the empress Irene Ducaena as "my most wise intelligence and understanding," the preface notes that the author's commission was to relate "the deeds of the great Alexius," Bryennius' benefactor.

Bryennius goes on to explain the modesty of his title, *Material for History*. Since to write a history or encomium of Alexius would demand "the genius of Thucydides" or "the eloquence of Demosthenes" and was therefore beyond Bryennius' powers, "I have begun this work with the intention of providing some material for those who might wish to write a history of [Alexius'] deeds." Despite his unpretentious title, Bryennius wrote a formal narrative on a generous scale, since in four substantial books it covers Alexius' exploits merely until 1080, several months short of his accession as emperor. The main reason it could be considered only "material for history" is that it includes several passages copied almost verbatim from Psellus' *Chronography* and Scylitzes' *Synopsis*, though such copying was common in Byzantine historiography and had recently been practiced by Scylitzes and Cedrenus.[25]

[22] Cf. Bryennius, preface 11, with Comnena, preface 3.1–4, VII.2.6, and XV.11.22 (noting that Irene died before Nicephorus). Because the *Cosmosotira Typikon* of 1152 (Petit, "Typikon," p. 65, chap. 95) records that Irene died on February 19 of a first indiction (1138, since she was certainly still alive long after the preceding 1st indiction, in 1123), Nicephorus must have died after John's Cilician campaign of 1138, not that of 1137. While the *Pantocrator Typikon*, dated to October 1136, commemorates both Nicephorus and Irene among the dead, their commemorations must belong to a somewhat later revision and recopying of that text. See Gautier, *Nicéphore*, pp. 27–29, and "Obituaire," pp. 242–44, 245–47 (Irene), and 251–52 (Nicephorus)—who, however, resists the obvious conclusion that the commemorations in the *Pantocrator Typikon* must be later additions, though he cannot explain the discrepancies in any other way.

[23] See Gautier, *Nicéphore*, pp. 33–51, and for the incomplete MS discovered after Gautier prepared his edition, see Failler, "Texte." For additional comments on the text and some suggested emendations, see Kambylis, "*Epirrhagologēmata*."

[24] The preface therefore begins at p. 71.18 of Gautier's edition (Bryennius, preface 11), and the earlier part of the text might better have been printed in an appendix. See Gautier, *Nicéphore*, pp. 46–51, and Seger, *Byzantinische Historiker*, pp. 83–106.

[25] Cf. Bryennius I.5, with Psellus, *Chronography* VIIa.16; Bryennius I.14, with Psellus, *Chronography* VIIb.19; Bryennius I.6, with Psellus, *Chronography* VIIb.16 (a parallel

While the first date Bryennius mentions is 1059, his connected narrative begins with 1070, and his wife describes it as beginning with the reign of Romanus IV (1068–71).[26] Unlike most of his predecessors except Attaliates, Bryennius seems not to have written a continuation of an earlier history, though he could easily have begun his narrative with the accession of Alexius' uncle, Isaac I, in 1057, the end of the first edition of Scylitzes' history, or with Isaac's abdication in 1059, the end of the first edition of Psellus' *Chronography*. Bryennius may not in fact have realized that the *Chronography* originally ended with 1057, since he copied the version that ended with 1074. Yet he presumably used the version of Scylitzes' *Synopsis* that ended with 1059, because he shows no knowledge of either Scylitzes' continuation or Attaliates' history, on which it was largely based, though both works would have been helpful in writing Bryennius' narrative.[27] When Bryennius says that he will omit the deeds of Isaac I because those who wish can read "the histories about him," he presumably means Psellus' *Chronography* and Scylitzes' *Synopsis*, which he was therefore continuing in a way.[28] Apparently Bryennius began with Romanus' reign because it was then that the adolescent Alexius Comnenus first wanted to go on campaign, and though his mother refused him permission this is also the first event Anna records in her *Alexiad*.[29]

Bryennius' Book I opens with a short account of the Comnenus family as far back as Alexius' grandfather Manuel under Basil II (976–1025). After a digression on the earliest attacks on the empire by the Turks, the book describes their defeat of Romanus IV at Manzikert, in 1071, and concludes with Romanus' blinding and death, in 1072. Book II covers events in Anatolia under Michael VII until 1075, emphasizing the earliest campaigns of Alexius Comnenus. With Book III attention shifts to Constantinople and the Balkans, with emphasis not only on the activities of Alexius but on the career and revolt of Nicephorus Bryennius, the historian's grandfather, until the accession of Nicephorus III Botaniates, in 1078. Book IV is mostly concerned with Alexius' victorious campaigns for Nicephorus III against Nicephorus Bryennius and Nicephorus Basilaces, and ends with the emperor's failed attempts to end the rebellion of Nicephorus Melissenus, in 1080. Presumably the historian planned to devote his Book V to Alexius' rebellion up to the new emperor's accession, in April 1081. Anna, however, confirms in her preface to the *Alexiad* that the finished part of her husband's text concluded before the end of the reign of Nicephorus III.[30]

overlooked by Gautier but noticed by Neville, *Heroes*, p. 46 n. 3); Bryennius I.17–22, with Psellus, *Chronography* VIIb.22–35; and Bryennius I.7–10, with Scylitzes, pp. 442–47.

[26] Comnena, preface 3.2.

[27] The resemblance between Bryennius I.1 (ὃν ὑποκορίζοντες ἐκάλουν Νικηφορίτζην) and *Scylitzes Continuatus*, p. 155.15 (ὃν ὑποκορίζοντες Νικηφορίτζην ὠνόμαζον), seems too trivial to show the dependence implied by Gautier in his apparatus. The logothete Nicephorus was generally called Nicephoritzes, and ὑποκορίζω was the standard term for using a diminutive.

[28] Bryennius I.3 (ταῖς περὶ τοῦτον … ἱστορίαις).

[29] Cf. Bryennius I.6, with Comnena I.1.1.

[30] Comnena, preface 3.3.

Because the extant narrative of Bryennius' *Material for History* ends shortly before its author was born, his personal memories were of no use in writing it, however valuable they might have been had he lived to complete his task. Although Bryennius died sixty-eight years after 1070, when his main narrative started, he must have been collecting material for some time. The imperial archives and library should have been open to him, and he certainly used Psellus' *Chronography* and Scylitzes' *Synopsis*. He was also related by blood or marriage to all the important members of the Comnenus, Bryennius, and Ducas families. He could surely remember his grandfather Nicephorus Bryennius, who was still active in 1095 when his grandson was entering his teens.[31] The younger Nicephorus Bryennius' father seems to have lived at least until 1100.[32] The historian was on especially familiar terms with the retired empress Irene Ducaena, who had asked him to write his history as a favor to her and lived almost as long as he did. Born in 1066, she had married Alexius I in 1078, when she was twelve and he was about twenty.[33] She was also the granddaughter of the Caesar John Ducas, who died around 1100, when she was in her thirties, and she had known many other Comneni, Bryennii, and Ducae whom her son-in-law was too young to have known at all well.[34]

Bryennius' history shows no clear signs of having literary or archival sources other than Psellus and Scylitzes. Though the text contains miniature encomia of Alexius Comnenus, John Ducas, and Nicephorus Bryennius the Elder, the historian seems not to have excerpted these from longer orations, or he would surely not have left a blank for Alexius' age and would probably have praised all three men at greater length.[35] Sometimes he appears to have distorted his account to favor John Ducas and especially the elder Bryennius. Thus the history glosses over the failure of John's inglorious proclamation as emperor by the Norman rebel Roussel, in 1074.[36] The elder Bryennius is depicted as trying to rescue Nicephorus

[31] See *PBW*, Nikephoros 62.

[32] See *PBW*, Anonymus 61.

[33] On Irene, see Polemis, *Doukai*, pp. 70–74, Skoulatos, *Personnages*, pp. 119–24, and *PBW*, Eirene 61 (but for her death, see pp. 346–47 and n. 22 above). Since Irene was "not yet past fifteen" on April 7, 1081 (Comnena III.1.5 and 3.3), she probably turned sixteen soon afterward.

[34] On John Ducas, see Polemis, *Doukai*, pp. 34–41, Skoulatos, *Personnages*, pp. 138–45, and *PBW*, Ioannes 62. The only evidence for the date of John's death is that Comnena II.7.1 says she "saw for a short time [κἀγὼ ἐπ' ὀλίγον ... τεθέαμαι]" how John gave good advice and practiced it. Since Anna was born on December 2, 1083, Polemis conjectured that John died c. 1088, when she was five; but she is unlikely to have relied on a judgment of John's advice formed when she was a mere child. Note that Comnena III.8.11 also says she "saw for a short time [κἀγὼ βραχύν τινα τεθέαμαι χρόνον]" the remarkable qualities of Anna Dalassena, who died on November 1, 1102 (see below, p. 357 n. 85), when her granddaughter was eighteen. That John was relatively inactive after 1081 is not surprising in view of his age; he was probably not much younger than his brother, Constantine X, who was born in 1006 (Polemis, *Doukai*, p. 28 and n. 4).

[35] Bryennius I.6 (Alexius), II.17 (John), III.2 (Nicephorus), and IV.15 (both Alexius and Nicephorus, leaving the blank; cf. Gautier, *Nicéphore*, p. 280 n. 4).

[36] Cf. Bryennius II.17, with Gautier, *Nicéphore*, pp. 176–77 nn. 6 and 7.

Basilaces from the Turks in 1071, when Basilaces seems actually to have been sent to rescue Bryennius.[37] During Bryennius' revolt the history mentions a victory of his brother, John, over the Pechenegs that apparently never happened.[38] Other sources fail to corroborate the history's report that Michael VII almost made the elder Bryennius Caesar and effective ruler of the empire.[39] On the other hand, John Ducas' part in orchestrating the adulterous marriage of Nicephorus III with Michael VII's wife seems worse than it really was in Bryennius' history, which mistakenly says that the groom as well as the bride had a spouse still living.[40] Here the history's aims of praising John and justifying Alexius' deposition of Nicephorus III were in conflict.

Some have suggested that Bryennius relied on a lost and unattested history sympathetic to the Ducas family in general and to John Ducas in particular.[41] One could argue at least as plausibly that Bryennius relied on a lost source that favored the elder Nicephorus Bryennius. Yet after John's tonsure, in 1074, and the elder Bryennius' blinding, in 1078, no one had much reason to write a history of those two unsuccessful generals, and not even the younger Bryennius could make them into real heroes. Much as he naturally sympathized with his grandfather and the grandfather of his patroness and mother-in-law, Irene, the historian could hardly disguise that Alexius Comnenus had defeated and captured the elder Bryennius for Nicephorus III, or that the Comneni had displaced the Ducas dynasty. Probably the younger Bryennius relied not on unknown literary sources but on stories told to him by elderly members and retainers of the Ducas and Bryennius families. Writing so long after the fact with few means to check their accuracy, he may not even have realized how tendentious their accounts were.

His history seems therefore to reflect views about the 1070's that members of the Ducas and Bryennius families had come to hold. Thus the historian claims that Romanus IV rejected good strategic advice (even when he actually took it) and, "having handled the task of reversing the [empire's] decline neither cleverly nor skillfully, was overthrown himself and overthrew the Roman state along with himself."[42] Not inaccurately, the historian dismisses Michael VII as a figurehead and depicts the logothete Nicephoritzes as the wily but wicked power behind the

[37] Cf. Bryennius I.14–15, with Gautier, *Nicéphore*, pp. 110–11 nn. 2 and 4.

[38] Cf. Bryennius III.14, with Gautier, *Nicéphore*, p. 237 n. 4. We may also doubt that John Bryennius tried to prevent his men from burning the suburbs of Constantinople (Bryennius III.12 and Gautier, *Nicéphore*, p. 234 n. 1), since Attaliates, *History* p. 252, says that John ordered them to do so.

[39] Bryennius III.2.

[40] Cf. Bryennius III.25, with Gautier, *Nicéphore*, p. 254 n. 1.

[41] For this idea, see Neville, "History" and *Heroes*, pp. 49–59, who suggests that Bryennius used a lost text favorable to John Ducas, and Stancovič, "Nikephoros," who suggests that both Bryennius and Anna used a text promoting the alliance between the Ducas and Comnenus families. On the current fashion for postulating biographical histories, see above, p. xiii. If Bryennius did use a text favorable to John Ducas, it was probably a funeral oration delivered soon after John's death—though such a text could hardly have included John's part in arranging the scandalous marriage of Nicephorus III.

[42] Cf. Bryennius I.4, with Gautier, *Nicéphore*, p. 106 n. 5, and Bryennius II.1 (quoted).

throne, who deceived John Ducas and plotted against John Bryennius.[43] In a passage that parallels criticism of Constantine IX in Psellus' *Chronography*, Bryennius denounces Nicephorus III for his excessive grants of ranks and money, and specifically for debasing the gold coinage.[44] While acknowledging the extent of the disaster in the 1070's that Psellus and Attaliates minimize, Bryennius assigns the blame to Romanus IV, Nicephoritzes, and Nicephorus III. In fact, Constantine X Ducas and Michael VII were largely responsible for the disintegration of the army, which Romanus IV temporarily checked, and Michael VII was more responsible for the debasement of the coinage than anyone else, including Nicephorus III.[45] By concentrating on details, Bryennius also fails to give a full picture of the political and military catastrophe, though he might have done better if his history had reached Alexius' accession.

Some of Bryennius' history must depend directly or indirectly on Alexius himself. In one of the history's most memorable episodes, as a young general in 1075 Alexius ransoms the Norman mercenary rebel Roussel from the Turks but finds that powerful Byzantines at Amasia want to free Roussel and join him in rebelling. Wishing to avoid a revolt but realizing that Roussel could be a valuable ally in the future, Alexius pretends to have him blinded and bandages his eyes. On the way back to Constantinople with Roussel, Alexius is upbraided by his relative Theodore Docianus for blinding such a capable soldier but delights Docianus by removing the bandage and revealing the ruse.[46] Anna Comnena includes a slightly shorter version of the same story in the *Alexiad*.[47] Bryennius' source for it can hardly be Roussel, who died in 1078, or Docianus, who is last attested in 1075.[48] Since Bryennius knew Alexius well and knew many others who knew him well, the emperor had probably told this story to his courtiers as an example of how even in his youth he had combined cunning with mercy.

The style of Bryennius' *Material for History*, again belying its title, is rather polished, though usually clear and seldom affected.[49] Nicephorus generally succeeds in writing passable classicizing Greek, and some of his apparent failures may be the result of copyist's errors, given the sorry state of our text. Taking advantage of the fact that Alexius' grandfather Manuel had two sons, Bryennius contrives to use the dual number seven times in the second sentence of Book I.[50] That second sentence is also an allusion to the first sentence of Xenophon's *Anabasis*, which

[43] Bryennius II.1–2 and III.5.

[44] Cf. Bryennius IV.1, with Psellus, *Chronography* VI.29.

[45] On the disintegration of the army see Treadgold, *Byzantium*, especially pp. 214–19, and on the debasement of the coinage see Grierson, *Catalogue* III.1, pp. 39–44, and Morrisson, "Monnaie," pp. 298–301.

[46] Bryennius II.22–25.

[47] Comnena I.2–3.

[48] See *PBW*, Roussel 61 and Theodoros 101.

[49] See especially Seger, *Byzantinische Historiker*, pp. 59–82.

[50] Bryennius I.1 (τούτοιν νέοιν ὄντοιν ἀμφοῖν ... ἄμφω τῶ παῖδε); cf. I.2 (verb forms: διηλλαξάτην ... συγκατελεγέτην).

uses similar dual forms for the two sons of the Persian king Darius II.[51] However, almost as if Bryennius thought that this reference sufficed to show his erudition, in the rest of his history he mostly limited his classical allusions to Homer and various proverbs.[52] He also compares Nicephoritzes to Pericles, who for some reason is cited as a troublemaker, compares one of Alexius' guardsmen to the Spartan general Brasidas, and borrows a passage from Book I of Polybius.[53] The dual number remains a regular feature of Bryennius' style.

Sometimes Bryennius uses archaic place names, such as "Galatia and Lycaonia" for the Anatolic Theme, "Asia" for the Thracesian Theme, "among the Odrysae" for Thrace, and "the city formerly called Orestias and now Adrianople." Refreshingly, he also mentions various unidentifiable and presumably insignificant contemporary place names.[54] The historian adapts his digression on the Turks from Scylitzes, and apparently invents a few brief speeches for Alexius Comnenus.[55] Like many classicizing historians, Bryennius avoids giving precise dates. He does, however, supply two numbers for the troops in John Bryennius' battle with Alexius in 1078, and both figures seem plausible, as we would expect of a writer with military experience. We may nonetheless doubt that John's forces killed "all" of Alexius' corps of the Immortals at the outset, as the historian says, since he reports that some of the Immortals attacked Bryennius' men later in the same battle.[56]

The theory has been proposed that besides the four books we have of the *Material for History* Nicephorus prepared extensive materials for the later books he planned to write, and that his widow later used those materials to compose her *Alexiad*.[57] Bryennius could in theory have had as long as twenty years to work on his history if he began it soon after Alexius' death, in 1118, even though the fact that he finished just four books of it suggests that he started work much later. Though he had other things to do, including campaigning, he customarily used a

[51] Xenophon, *Anabasis* I.1 (τὼ παῖδε ἀμφοτέρω).

[52] See Gautier's apparatus and notes to Bryennius I.13 (a proverb), II.10 (a proverb from Sophocles), II.14 (a proverb), II.22 (a proverb), II.27 (*Iliad*), III.2 (a proverb from Plato), III.9 (a proverb), III.25 (*Iliad*), IV.22 (a proverb), IV.25 (*Odyssey*), IV.26 (*Iliad*), IV.28 (a proverb from Euripides, but cf. n. 53 below), IV.33 (a proverb), and IV.35 (a proverb). Rare scriptural references appear at Bryennius I.5 and 22 (two each). Additional allusions may not yet have been identified.

[53] Bryennius II.1 and II.13; Gautier, *Nicéphore*, pp. 144 n. 1 (read *Acharniens*) and 164–65 n. 1, suggests possible sources. See also Neville, *Heroes*, pp. 39–45, with pp. 41–42 on Bryennius IV.28, borrowed (along with the proverb from Euripides) from Polybius I.35.

[54] Bryennius II.4 (Galatia, Lycaonia, Asia) and III.5 (Odrysae, Orestias), and for unidentified places see Gautier, *Nicéphore*, pp. 158 n. 1 (Bryennius II.9, Decte), 180 n. 1 (Bryennius II.18, Mount Maroxus and Trisea), 240 n. 6 (Bryennius III.16, Atzula), etc.

[55] Bryennius I.7–10 (adapted from Scylitzes, pp. 442–47) and II.10, 22, and 23 (Alexius' speeches).

[56] See Bryennius IV.6 (the divisions of 5,000 and 3,000 men in Bryennius' army), and cf. IV.8 and IV.11 (the Immortals).

[57] See Howard-Johnston, "Anna," disputed by Macrides, "Pen," E. Jeffreys, "Nikephoros," and Reinsch, "Women's Literature," especially pp. 97–101.

secretary or secretaries when he composed.[58] That he had begun to collect information for the books after his Book IV, which seems to be essentially complete, is quite possible, and he must already have known a good deal about events after 1080 from his own experience and from conversations with Irene Ducaena and other courtiers.

Nevertheless, his widow, Anna, after praising him at length in her preface, readily acknowledges her debt to the history "up to the times of the emperor Nicephorus Botaniates" that Bryennius "had produced in haste and brought us back half-finished from abroad." By "half-finished" she evidently meant that the history was less than fully revised and had failed to reach its planned conclusion, not that it included rough drafts of the parts after the reign of Nicephorus III.[59] While she mentions that her husband had written elegant works besides his *Material for History*, she seems not to have used them in her *Alexiad*, because she claims that all of her sources for Alexius' life were either oral or writings of no literary value whatever.[60] Outside of her preface, she refers five times in her text to her husband's history, but only to parts that we possess.[61] Therefore Anna seems unlikely to have based any substantial part of the *Alexiad* on materials left her by her husband. We may suspect with more reason that she edited and partly rewrote the four books of her husband's work to make them more finished than he had left them, adding the title *Material for History* as an implied reference to her using them for her *Alexiad*. Such a suspicion is, however, unverifiable.

A history that breaks off before reaching the main part of its subject is difficult to judge fairly. Only the first of the fifteen books of the *Alexiad* concerns the period covered by Nicephorus' history, evidently because Anna decided to refer to her husband's work rather than give these years more space.[62] If Nicephorus had written on the same scale as his widow, his completed *Material for History* would have had some eighteen books, not just four, and would probably have focused more consistently on Alexius. What we have of it is a readable but rather diffuse account of ten tumultuous years when various figures vied for power and influence, most of them members of the Comnenus, Ducas, and Bryennius families. We should scarcely be surprised that Bryennius took these introductory books as an opportunity to write at length about his own grandfather and the grandfather of Irene Ducaena, who had commissioned the history. While Bryennius blames the collapse of the Byzantine army and state on Romanus IV, Nicephoritzes, and Nicephorus III without much further explanation, the analyses of Psellus and Attaliates are scarcely more satisfactory, and they, unlike Bryennius, were able to

58 Cf. the letter of Michael Italicus to Bryennius in Gautier, *Nicéphore*, p. 375 (= Italicus, *Letters* 16).

59 Comnena, preface 3.3–4 (ἡμιτελὲς).

60 Cf. Comnena, preface 3.2 (συγγράμματα μνήμης καὶ λόγου ἄξια), with XIV.7.7 (συγγραμμάτων ἀχρείων καὶ ἀσπουδῶν παντάπασι). The latter passage is translated and discussed below, pp. 362–63 and n. 116.

61 Comnena I.1.3, I.4.2, II.1.1, VII.2.5, and X.2.2.

62 Cf. Comnena I.1.3, I.4.2, VII.2.5–6, and X.2.2.

finish their histories. As it is, Bryennius' *Material for History* is the mature work of an intelligent and cultivated man, and its title is best understood as an expression of the author's modesty.

Anna Comnena

With Anna Comnena, we come to the second great historian of the middle Byzantine period (after Michael Psellus), the first Byzantine historian of imperial blood (excluding Constantine VII), and the only female Byzantine historian of any period.[63] Our information about her life is relatively ample. She not only refers to herself in her history but was an important historical figure in her own right and the subject of a eulogy by the priest George Tornices, who knew her and was probably commissioned to write by her daughter Irene.[64] Anna was born on Saturday, December 2, 1083, in the Purple Room of the Great Palace, which served as the empress's bedchamber, the first child of the emperor Alexius I and his wife, Irene Ducaena. Alexius had returned the day before from a successful campaign against the invading Normans of Sicily. Anna relates that her mother had felt labor pains several days earlier, but made the sign of the cross over her womb and told her baby, "Wait, little child, for your father to come." Anna asserts that as an infant she resembled her father in every way. This we may take more as a sign of filial pride than as literal truth, but both father and daughter were apparently short, dark, energetic, self-possessed, and good-looking, with fine eyebrows.[65]

Perhaps that Christmas, Anna was crowned and betrothed to her second cousin once removed, the nine-year-old Constantine Ducas, who as the son of the deposed Michael VII and Maria of Alania had an hereditary claim to the throne.[66] According to a rumor that Anna mentions but naturally rejects, on taking power, in 1081, Alexius had considered divorcing his wife, Irene, and marrying the

[63] On Anna, see especially Buckler, *Anna*, Dalven, *Anna*, Leib, *Anne* I, pp. vii–clxxxi, Ljubarskij, "Why?" Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* III, pp. 397–425, Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 400–409, Reinsch and Kambylis, *Annae Comnenae Alexias* I, pp. 3*–57* (primarily on the text), Lilie, "Erste Kreuzzug" (cf. Reinsch, "*De minimis*"), Varzos, *Γενεαλογία*, pp. 176–97, Skoulatos, *Personnages*, Neville, "Lamentation," and *PBW*, Anna 62.

[64] See Darrouzès, *Georges*, pp. 20–32 and 316–17 n. 101.

[65] Comnena VI.8.1–2. Her birthdate is sometimes erroneously given as December 1, the day her father returned, but she makes it clear that she was born the next day at dawn. Comnena III.3.1 describes her father, but at XIV.7.4 she declines to describe her own appearance, probably out of modesty. Tornices, *Eulogy* p. 247, describes her beauty in old age in fairly conventional terms that include a commanding presence, energy, and striking eyebrows; cf. Theodore Prodromus' description of Anna c. 1122 in Gautier, *Nicéphore*, p. 347, which also mentions her eyes.

[66] Comnena VI.8.3 ("a certain number of days" after Anna's birth, making Christmas the first suitable festival for a coronation). Constantine was "not quite seven years old" on April 4, 1081 (Comnena III.1.3), but he was already born when Psellus completed his supplement to the *Chronography*, before mid-1074. (See above, p. 280 n. 48.) For the exact relationship between Constantine and Anna, see the genealogical table in Polemis, *Doukai*, after p. 216. Further on Constantine, see Skoulatos, *Personnages*, pp. 55–60, and *PBW*, Konstantinos 62.

beautiful Maria. The Ducas family defended the interests of their relative Irene by demanding that Maria leave the Great Palace; but they had nothing against her son, Constantine, who was himself a Ducas. After Alexius agreed to recognize Constantine as co-emperor, Maria moved to the nearby Palace of the Mangana.[67] When Anna was born, Alexius betrothed her to Constantine to bring him into the imperial family and soon sent Anna to the Mangana to be raised by her prospective mother-in-law.[68] Anna was much taken with Maria and her son and expresses admiration for both of them in the *Alexiad*.[69] Presumably Maria was responsible for the early stages of Anna's excellent education. Constantine's tutor was the learned Theophylact, the future archbishop of Ochrid, and according to Tornices Anna was more interested in learning than Constantine was.[70] Even in September 1087, when Irene bore Alexius his first son, the future John II, Constantine seems to have kept his imperial privileges, and the three-year-old Anna continued to live with him and his mother at the Mangana.[71]

Anna says in the *Alexiad* that she was "brought up with [Constantine Ducas] by the empress [Maria] from early childhood until I was not quite eight years old, and she, having a strong affection for me, shared all her secrets with me." Later Anna laments that to describe "how many things afflicted me from the time I was not quite eight years old, and how many enemies the baseness of the human race raised up for me, demands the siren song of Isocrates, the eloquence of Pindar, the roar of Polemo, the Calliope of Homer, the lyre of Sappho, or some other power beyond those."[72] Since both times Anna gives her age as "not quite eight years old," evidently she felt that her misfortunes had begun with her separation from Maria and transfer to the Great Palace, in 1091. Maria became a nun, probably at the convent of the Mangana. Constantine retained his imperial insignia for a short time and, even after losing them, remained engaged to Anna and enjoyed favor with Alexius.[73] In spring 1094 Constantine accompanied the emperor on a

[67] Comnena III.2.1, 2.3, and 4.7.

[68] Comnena III.1.4.

[69] Comnena I.12.3 and III.1.3, 2.1, and 2.4.

[70] See Gautier, *Théophylacte* I, pp. 22–67 (though I would date Theophylact's oration addressed to Constantine, and consequently the beginning of Theophylact's episcopate, to 1091, while Gautier prefers 1089/90; see n. 73 below); cf. Tornices, *Eulogy*, p. 253.

[71] John was born on Sept. 13, 1087; cf. Schreiner, *Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken* I, p. 55, no. 5.3, with Comnena VI.8.4–5.

[72] Cf. Comnena III.1.4 (οὔπω τὸν ὄγδοον ὑπερελάσασα χρόνον) and XIV.7.4 (οὔπω τὸν ὄγδοον ὑπερελασάσῃ χρόνον). By "Polemo" Anna presumably means the orator Antonius Polemo of Laodicea (c. 88–c. 144); see *RE* XXI.2 (1952), cols. 1320–57 (with col. 1356 on Anna's reference).

[73] Theophylact of Ochrid, *Oration*, pp. 185–91, shows that Maria was already a nun when Theophylact addressed his oration to Constantine, at a time when Constantine was still emperor and Theophylact was not yet archbishop of Ochrid. The date was presumably in 1091, since Maria did not become a nun before Anna was separated from her in that year and Theophylact was archbishop by spring 1092. (Cf. Gautier, *Théophylacte* I, pp. 33–34 and 67, who is, however, uncertain of the date.) See Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.21.16–20, on Constantine's loss of the imperial insignia.

campaign against the Serbs as far as Constantine's estate in Serres, in Macedonia. There the young man fell ill, and Alexius insisted on his going no further. Apparently Constantine died of his illness the next August, when he was twenty and Anna was, at ten, not yet of marriageable age.[74] Soon afterward Constantine's mother, Maria, was implicated in a plot to replace Alexius with a son of Romanus IV. She seems to have been relegated to a convent on the island of Principo, in the Sea of Marmara.[75]

Anna claims still to have been unable to restrain herself from tears when she mentions Constantine in the *Alexiad*.[76] While he may well have been a charming young man, and since she was only a child she probably looked up to him, much of his charm surely lay in his claim to the throne. Maria was presumably the one who told little Anna that she and her betrothed had been repeatedly acclaimed as "Constantine and Anna" after their engagement.[77] Even after John Comnenus was recognized as Alexius' heir, Maria probably advised Anna that her situation was like that of Helen Lecapena, the daughter of the usurper Romanus I, who was married by Romanus in 919 to the legitimate emperor, Constantine VII. Eventually, after Romanus' eldest son and heir had died and Romanus' younger sons had discredited themselves by deposing their father, Constantine VII and Helen became senior emperor and empress, and despite other temporary usurpations the Macedonian dynasty went on reigning until it died out a century later. Presumably Anna hoped that something similar would happen to her, Constantine Ducas, and the Ducas dynasty, and many years later she continued to brood over what might have been.

Although Anna evidently loved her parents, her leaving Maria's care meant not just separation from Constantine and a decline in her status and prospects but probably an interruption of her secular education. According to Tornices' eulogy, Anna's parents had no interest in secular literature and no desire for their daughter to study it. Anna had to resort to taking surreptitious lessons from palace eunuchs until her mother relented, still before Anna had reached her full height, and allowed her to study with philosophers in the palace.[78] Anna remarks that the Ducas family were "extremely fond of learning" and had patronized Michael Psellus and the philosopher John Italus, Psellus' student, whom Alexius

[74] See Comnena IX.5.4–6. The anonymous introduction to Bryennius, pp. 65–67, indicates that this was the same illness that later killed Constantine. He died on August 12, 1094 (Kouroupou and Vannier, "Commémoraisons," p. 67, no. 32).

[75] Cf. Comnena IX.8.2 (Maria's knowledge of the conspiracy of Nicephorus Diogenes) with Theophylact of Ochrid, *Letters* 4, pp. 137–41 (Maria's residence on Principo, not mentioned by Anna, when Theophylact was already archbishop of Ochrid, thus after 1091, though he could conceivably be referring to a temporary stay sometime before 1094). Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.21.19, says that Maria became a nun "at one time willingly, at another time somewhat under compulsion," apparently contrasting her voluntary retirement at the Mangana, in 1091, with her largely involuntary relegation to Principo, in 1094.

[76] Comnena I.12.3.

[77] Comnena VI.8.3.

[78] Tornices, *Eulogy*, pp. 243–47 and 263–65.

prosecuted and excommunicated for heresy in 1082. While endorsing this condemnation, Anna insists that Italus later repented of his errors. Since she describes his appearance and mannerisms as if she had met him, he may have been one of the philosophers she says she saw in the palace.[79]

Alexius ceded most authority over the empire's domestic affairs to his widowed mother, Anna Dalassena, during the first part of his reign, when he spent most of his time campaigning. According to her granddaughter, Anna Dalassena was openly hostile to the whole Ducas family.[80] Presumably she favored demoting Constantine Ducas; the patriarch Cosmas I (1075–81) obviously thought that she wanted Alexius to divorce Irene Ducaena.[81] A pious old woman who according to the *Alexiad* wanted to enter a convent and ran the palace like a monastery, she seems also to have disliked secular learning.[82] Anna Comnena must have resented this hostility to her beloved mother and fiancé and to the education she pursued as a child, but by the time she wrote she had no wish to emphasize these family differences. Her description of her grandmother, for whom she must have been named, is long and laudatory but ends with the subtly ambiguous remark that a panegyrist would have praised Anna Dalassena above all the famous men of history, but an historian should not be allowed to use such "license."[83] The *Alexiad* records that Anna Dalassena forced the abdication of the patriarch Cosmas, whom it praises for his holiness, and promoted the patriarch Eustratius Garidas (1081–84), whom it criticizes for accepting Italus' heresy.[84] Zonaras tells us that Alexius came to begrudge his mother's power, leading her to retire, around 1095, to a convent in Constantinople, where she remained until her death, in 1102.[85] Anna expresses or implies strong affection for her mother, father, husband, fiancé, and fiancé's mother, but not for her grandmother. She refers to her grandmother's death only by observing that both Alexius' mother and his pet lion died on days when false prophecies had said Alexius would die himself.[86]

[79] Comnena V.8.4–8.

[80] Comnena III.2.1.

[81] Comnena III.2.7.

[82] Comnena III.6.2 and 8.2.

[83] Comnena III.8.5 (ἄδειαν).

[84] Cf. Comnena III.2.7 (replacement of Cosmas with Eustratius), with III.4.4 (Cosmas' holiness) and V.9.5 (Garidas and Italus).

[85] See Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.24.8–11. Her last attested act before her retirement was in 1095 (Cheynet and Vannier, *Études*, pp. 96–97), and by late 1095 her administration must have seemed less necessary, because the empire was as secure as it had been since the beginning of Alexius' reign, and more secure than it would be after the Crusaders arrived, in 1096. She died on a November 1 (Kouroupou and Vannier, "Commémoraisons," p. 51, no. 9), a year and a few months before her son Isaac Comennus (Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.24.11); Isaac died on a February 19 (Kouroupou and Vannier, "Commémoraisons," pp. 55–56, no. 16; on p. 56, "29 février" is a misprint for "19 février") of a year that must be 1104, because Isaac seems to have been alive in 1103 (Comnena XII.6.3) and was dead before November 17, 1104 (Papachryssanthou, "Date," especially pp. 252–53).

[86] Comnena VI.7.5.

Probably in 1096, not much past the canonical age of twelve, Anna married Nicephorus Bryennius, who received the rank of panhypersebastus and later that of Caesar.[87] Though she soon began to bear children and to have the responsibilities of a wife and mother, she continued her education in philosophy, rhetoric, poetry, and history.[88] When she heard several of Italus' students speak in the palace, she could follow what they were saying.[89] She evidently witnessed the arrival of the Crusaders at Constantinople, in 1097, and declares that "for the most part" she accompanied her father and mother on military campaigns.[90] Irene had gone on campaign with her husband, and slept with him in his tent, as early as 1094; after 1097, when he began to suffer from gout, she habitually accompanied him so that she could massage his feet, advise him, and ward off conspirators.[91] Anna made at least a cursory study of medicine, no doubt largely out of concern for her father's health.[92] She mentions coming to help her mother tend her father on campaigns, including that of 1105 against the Normans and apparently those of 1107 against the Normans and of 1114 against the Cumans.[93] Probably in 1103, when Anna saw the four Anemas brothers being pitiably paraded through Constantinople on their way to be blinded for plotting against Alexius, she persuaded her mother to ask the emperor to commute their sentence. He did so, but we may reasonably suspect that he had staged the whole dramatic episode to gain more credit for his usual clemency.[94]

While Anna certainly admired her father, Tornices tells us that she and her mother were inseparable and spent most of their time together.[95] Anna's dislike of her brother John led her to insinuate that the general rejoicing at his birth was insincere, that he deserted his dying father to seek power, and that everything Alexius had achieved was ruined after his death through the "stupidity" of John and his son Manuel.[96] She compares Alexius to Christ, "rejected, assaulted, beaten, and finally condemned to the cross by lawless men," before declaring that she must restrain herself from naming the "cruel men" who persecuted her father at the end. Here she can scarcely mean anyone but John and his supporters. A little

[87] See above, p. 345 and n. 9.

[88] On her education, cf. Comnena, preface 1.2, and XV.7.9, with Tornices, *Eulogy*, pp. 257–59, Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 10, and Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.26.15–16.

[89] Comnena V.9.2.

[90] Comnena XIV.7.4.

[91] Comnena IX.5.3 (campaign of 1094), XII.3.2–7 (Irene's ministrations for Alexius' gout), and XIV.4.2–8 (the beginning of Alexius' gout, allegedly caused by spending too much time sitting with the Crusaders in 1097).

[92] Cf. Comnena XII.3.7 (relating to 1105), XV.11.3 (Anna's consultation with her father's physicians), 11.10, 11.15, and 11.19 (Anna at Alexius' deathbed), and Tornices, *Eulogy*, pp. 267–69 and 283. Buckler, *Anna*, pp. 215–21, collects the references that show Anna's knowledge of medicine.

[93] Comnena XII.3.7 (1105), XIII.1.1 (1107), and XIV.8.2 (1114).

[94] Comnena XII.6.5–9.

[95] Tornices, *Eulogy*, pp. 257–63.

[96] Comnena VI.8.4 (the reaction to John's birth), XIV.3.8 (ἀβελτηρίᾳ), and XV.11.17 (John's alleged desertion).

later, discussing the causes of her father's gout, she refers to an unnamed villain who was Alexius' constant companion and never left him alone. "Moreover, if one looks at this man's nature, he was not just a cause of [Alexius'] disease, but a disease itself and its most severe symptom." She promises to return to this subject "at the right time," but she never does. Her reference looks very much as if it applies to John, accusing him at the least of hastening his father's death by constantly pressing his claim to the throne and deserting Alexius during his final illness—and at the most, of somehow poisoning him.[97]

In this context, Nicetas Choniates and John Zonaras were evidently right that Irene and Anna aspired to have Nicephorus Bryennius made emperor in 1118. They depict Alexius as favoring his son's claims against his wife's persistent support for Bryennius while being unwilling or unable to silence her. Impelled by her attachment to Anna, Irene insisted that John was reckless, dissolute, indecisive, and sickly whereas Bryennius was capable and well educated. When Alexius was on his deathbed in the Mangana Palace, both John and Bryennius had prominent partisans at court. Though John was already co-emperor, Bryennius had the still-prestigious rank of Caesar. What seems to have decided the succession is that Bryennius, Anna, and Irene stayed by Alexius' deathbed in the Mangana Palace while John acted decisively. He managed to obtain the emperor's signet ring, probably with Alexius' consent, and to have himself acclaimed by a crowd outside the Mangana. Appealing in vain to John to desist, to Bryennius to seize power, and to Alexius to intervene, Irene accused her son of sedition and berated her gasping but smiling husband for tricking her as he had already tricked so many others. When John went to the Great Palace and found that the Varangian Guard would not open its doors, he had the doors taken off their hinges and locked himself in with his partisans. After Alexius died the same night, John secured his throne, ignoring Irene's demands that he attend his father's funeral the next day.[98]

Even after John had become emperor, Irene and Anna could portray him as having treated his father with disrespect, and Anna may well have spread a rumor that John had poisoned Alexius. The men she denounces as her enemies evidently included those Choniates names as John's allies: his brother Isaac, his cousins John Comnenus and Gregory Taronites, and his friend John Axuch. Nicetas claims that the next year Anna was the prime mover in the conspiracy to assassinate

[97] Comnena XIV.3.6 and 4.9. Cf. Buckler, *Anna*, pp. 249–50: "[W]e may well believe that by these 'bosom' enemies of her father she meant her brother John. … [M]ay she not when conspiring against him have seized on some real or fancied grievance in the hopes of driving him from the throne to which she never denied his rights?"

[98] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 5–8; cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.24.19–26, 26.14–18, and 28.13–29.10. Neville, *Heroes*, pp. 16–24, discusses these circumstances at length, if inconclusively. She is, however, mistaken that "setting the beginnings of his history in the context of Alexios's dysfunctional household contributes to Choniates's larger agenda of explaining the fall of Constantinople in 1204 in terms of Comnenian failings" (p. 20), because Nicetas wrote this part of his work before 1202, when he could not have foreseen the events of 1204; see below, p. 428 and n. 37. That Alexius' family was dysfunctional seems indisputable in any case.

John II in the suburban palace of Philopatium. Irene, if Anna approached her, refused to join the plot, and later said that she was unwilling either to overthrow an established emperor or to have her own son killed. We have seen that the conspiracy miscarried when Bryennius, after promising to join it, failed to act at the last moment, to Anna's fury. At first John confiscated Anna's personal property, including many precious objects, much cash, and her wardrobe, and awarded it to his friend Axuch—who, however, persuaded him to give it back to her.[99]

John quickly reconciled with Bryennius, but never really with Anna. She writes in Book XIV of the *Alexiad*, "This is the thirtieth year, I swear by the souls of the emperors of blessed memory [Alexius, Irene, and Nicephorus Bryennius], that I have not beheld, not seen, not spoken with any of my father's men, not just because many of them have perished, but because through the vicissitudes of politics many are held back by fear."[100] The obvious interpretation is that Anna was writing in 1148, the thirtieth year after the failure of her conspiracy, in 1119, and had been in disgrace ever since. As for where she lived, her mother, Irene, retired to a mansion attached to the Convent of Mary Full of Grace, in northwestern Constantinople, probably just after Alexius' death, in 1118. There, in the mid-1120's, Irene specified that after her death

> my very dear Lady Anna, the Porphyrogenita and wife of the Caesar, should have and hold without hindrance, as long as she may live, not just all the chambers in which she was residing during my lifetime, but also all the buildings in the Convent of Mary Full of Grace that were used by my majesty and my children and my male and female servants, along with the outer courtyard located directly next to the courtyard of the more sumptuous buildings.

Irene also bequeathed to Anna a church of St. Demetrius and two bathhouses, with permission to build whatever other buildings she wished around them.[101] Evidently in 1119, if not the year before, Anna went to live with her mother in the "sumptuous buildings" attached to the convent. Neither Irene nor Anna appears to have become a nun before she was on her deathbed.

While some prominent courtiers must have found it prudent to stay away from Anna, as she claims, and she doubtless found life less interesting in the precincts of a convent than it had been in the Great Palace, she was by no means isolated. Her mother lived with her in the same palatial residence. Anna attended the double wedding of her sons around 1122, when she was said to be "sharing her bed" with Bryennius.[102] Most of the time he probably lived with her in her quarters, where

[99] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 8–12.

[100] Comnena XIV.7.6.

[101] See Gautier, "Typikon," pp. 8 (for the retirement of Irene and Anna after 1118), 14 (for the date of the second part of the *Kecharitomene Typikon*, between 1120 [actually 1122, the date of the marriage of Anna's sons] and 1130), and 137–38 (the text of chapter 79). For the approximate location of this convent, see Janin, *Géographie*, pp. 188–91.

[102] See Theodore Prodromus in Gautier, *Nicéphore*, pp. 347–49.

he talked with her mother, eventually worked on the history that Irene commissioned him to write, and was nursed by his wife during his last illness, in 1138.[103] Anna admits that she was visited by old men who had served under her father and later became monks.[104] Tornices says that she received not just learned monks but secular scholars with whom she discussed Aristotle, Plato, Euclid, and Ptolemy, and that she commissioned commentaries on Aristotle from the philosopher Michael of Ephesus. Tornices also mentions her reading oratory, history, tragedy, comedy, and philosophy, including Democritus and Heraclitus.[105] The *Alexiad* shows that Anna had a remarkably comprehensive knowledge of Greek poetry, drama, novels, historiography, philosophy, medicine, and literature in general, as well as the Scriptures and Church Fathers. The books to which she alludes most often, more even than to the Bible, are the *Iliad* and the *Chronography* of Michael Psellus.[106] Rare though Psellus' history evidently was, it reached Anna, who to judge from her frequent imitations of it must have read it again and again. She was evidently fascinated by its elaborate style and descriptions of power struggles in the courts of so many recent emperors, and it became a major inspiration for her own history. In the *Alexiad* she praises Psellus for both his genius and his erudition.[107]

Anna took care first of her mother and then of her husband during their final illnesses, in 1138. Anna had been closer to them than to anyone else, and we can easily believe that their deaths, coming so close to each other, left her feeling utterly bereft. She was not quite fifty-six years old. In the *Alexiad* she says, "Bewailing my misfortune, by this time mourning three emperors—my father the emperor, my lady and mother the empress, and (alas!) my husband the Caesar—for the most part I sit in a corner and devote myself to books and to God."[108] She decided to take on the task of writing the history of her father's reign that her mother had requested and her husband had left unfinished. Yet she never says that the dying Nicephorus had asked her to continue his history, and if he had asked, she had no obvious reason not to tell us so. While she was unusually well educated, thus far she seems to have been more a reader than a writer of literature, who had not attempted any lengthy literary work. She apparently wrote her will and four or five short poems totaling nineteen lines, but ordinary Byzantine aristocrats could do as much. Her father, Alexius, was no scholar, but he had addressed two longish poems to his son John.[109]

[103] Comnena, preface 3.4.

[104] Comnena XIV.7.7.

[105] Tornices, *Eulogy* pp. 281–83.

[106] See the index in Reinsch and Kambylis, *Annae Comnenae Alexias* II, pp. 261–71. Note that they list sixty-one verbal allusions to the *Iliad*, sixty to Psellus' *Chronography*, and forty-five to the Bible.

[107] Comnena V.8.3.

[108] Comnena XIV.7.6, and Tornices, *Eulogy*, pp. 295–97 and 305 (for the problem with Irene's death date mentioned by Darrouzès, *Georges*, p. 304 n. 90; see pp. 346–47 and n. 22 above).

[109] See Buckler, *Anna*, pp. 5–10 and 23 (quoting a fifth short poem that may possibly be Anna's, though calling herself "beautiful," even in an Homeric quotation, seems uncharacteristic of her; note her refusal to describe her physical appearance in XIV.7.4).

Alexius' reign must have had great appeal for Anna as a subject. She genuinely admired her father, who was in many respects a remarkable man. She owed her position, and the rights that she thought went with it, entirely to him. She could remember most of his reign, which was the time when she had been happiest and had hoped for an even happier future. By 1138, eighty-one years had passed since Alexius' birth, and twenty years since his death. Eyewitnesses were rapidly dying off, and Anna knew of nobody still alive who was planning to write about him. Although she may originally have thought of continuing Bryennius' work from the point where it broke off, in 1080, she eventually decided to write an independent history that would incorporate much of Bryennius' material. In Book XIV, which as we have seen she seems to have been writing in 1148, she says that she collected her information "mostly under the third holder of the scepter of the empire beginning with my father."[110] Therefore she started gathering material before the accession of Manuel I, in 1143, but did most of her work after that date.

She naturally had her own memories of life at court, of the times when she had accompanied her father on his campaigns, and of the war stories that she had heard him tell his family.[111] As she puts it, "Having learned about these matters in one way or another, I know some things from my own experience and others from men who campaigned with my father; I heard other things by means of couriers who conveyed to us what had happened in his battles; and in particular I often heard in person the emperor and George Palaeologus describing them."[112] Yet the events that Anna remembered from her father's reign were at least twenty years in the past when she decided to write her history. George Palaeologus, her mother's brother-in-law, last appears in the *Alexiad* in 1101, almost forty years before Anna wrote, and since he was an important person and nothing more is heard of him, he probably died soon afterward.[113] Even direct recollections, especially of names and dates, fade and become confused over time, as Anna admits her own had done.[114]

We have seen that Anna collected most of her material under Manuel I. She says that "there are men who survive today, knew my father, and tell stories about him, by whom many things in this present history have been contributed, because each of them described and recalled what had happened to him, and all of them corroborated each other."[115] She sums up:[116]

> The things that I have compiled in my history, let God and His celestial Mother my Lady know, I gathered from inelegant writings without any literary

[110] Comnena XIV.7.5.
[111] See Comnena I.6.9 and VII.3.11.
[112] Comnena XIV.7.5.
[113] Comnena XI.3.2; cf. *PBW*, Georgios 61. Skoulatos, *Personnages*, pp. 99–105, however, believes that George died after 1119, because he is not mentioned among the dead in the *Kecharitomene Typikon*.
[114] Comnena V.9.4.
[115] Comnena XIV.7.4.
[116] Comnena XIV.7.7.

> pretensions, and from old veterans who were serving when my father took up the scepter of the Romans, who have had many experiences, and who were transferred from the tumults of the world to the tranquility of the monks. That is to say, the writings that have come into my hands were simple in style and artless, adhering to the truth, displaying nothing at all refined, and clothing themselves in no rhetorical majesty; and the things related by the veterans adhered closely to the same sort of language and thinking as those writings. I have determined the truth of my history from these, combining and comparing what I knew with what they said, and what they said with what I knew—whatever I had heard from my father himself and from my paternal and maternal uncles, on many occasions. From all these things the whole substance of the truth has been woven together.

By the standards of Byzantine historians, this is an unusually clear and detailed explanation of an unusually systematic but quite credible historical method. Anna describes three kinds of sources: her own memories, nonliterary documents, and what seem to have been interviews with old soldiers, during which she apparently took notes or had notes taken for her by a secretary. In her narrative she refers several times to these veterans. She says that some of them had told her of the miserable condition of the empire at her father's accession, in 1081; she mentions an informant who had been present at the Normans' siege of Dyrrhachium that same year; she cites retainers of George Palaeologus as sources for Alexius' campaign against the Pechenegs in 1091; and she cites eyewitnesses, probably the same men, for how that campaign ended.[117] At some point Anna also spoke with a Westerner who claimed to have been with the Norman expedition that invaded the empire in 1081.[118] We may safely assume that much more information in the *Alexiad* comes from such oral sources. The oldest of these informants must have been elderly, since a man who was eighteen in 1081 would have been eighty-five in 1148. Anna collected her information just in time.

Obviously Anna consulted not only oral sources but written ones, especially for the years before her father's accession. The "inelegant" writings that she used included official documents, of which she quotes at least two and may paraphrase others.[119] Her "artless" sources may also have included personal letters or annals with extremely brief entries. We still have a page-long chronicle that records the birthdates of Alexius I's nine children from 1083 to 1098 in one short sentence each, and Anna may well have been able to refer to one or two more such records.[120] Yet from what she says she seems very unlikely to have found a

[117] Comnena III.9.1, IV.5.1, VIII.2.5, and IX.1.2.

[118] Comnena III.12.8. This man, who told Anna that he had been a representative of the bishop of Bari in 1081, presumably came to Constantinople in another capacity much later, probably while Anna was researching her history.

[119] See below, p. 381 and n. 197.

[120] Schreiner, *Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken* I, pp. 54–56, no. 5. See below, p. 372 and n. 150.

chronicle that covered her father's whole reign in connected prose. In the first three books of the *Alexiad* she used, and sometimes copied, the formal literary histories of the earlier period by her husband, Psellus, and Scylitzes.[121] She can scarcely have forgotten that she had done so, because, besides her direct references to Bryennius' work, in Book IX she refers her readers to "various historians" who wrote on the reign of Romanus IV, evidently meaning Bryennius, Psellus, and Scylitzes.[122] Yet in the description of her method quoted above she appears to be referring only to Alexius' reign, which those three historians do not cover. While the world history of John Zonaras extends to 1118 and was probably finished before the *Alexiad*, Anna seems not to have known about it, or at any rate to have chosen to ignore it because its treatment of Alexius' reign is brief and not very favorable. She seems not to have known Attaliates' history either.

Although the *Alexiad* is obviously a labor of love, Anna, like all scholars and writers, sometimes found her task tedious, particularly as it seemed to grow longer with no end in sight. In Book I, after describing the self-important pretender in the Norman court who claimed to be Michael VII, she remarks, "I begin to smile when I think of these things, and laughter reaches my lips as I move my pen under the lamp."[123] By Book XIII, however, in discussing Alexius' war with the Normans, in 1108, she finds that her work has become more burdensome, especially toward the end of the day:[124]

> As I have come this far, and move my pen and almost doze over my writing around the time of the lighting of the lamps, I realize that my narrative is straying. Whenever the use of barbarian names and the relating of one subject after another are necessarily called for, both the substance of my history and the coherence of my prose seem to come apart where they were joined together. I should not be blamed for this by those who come to my book with sympathy.

These endearingly personal asides show that Anna worked long hours and habitually wrote with her own hand, even though she could easily have afforded a secretary. A secretary may of course have made fair copies of her corrected drafts.

George Tornices says in his eulogy of Anna that at first she tried to conceal her last illness, which appears to have been a brain tumor. She rallied after her physicians despaired of her, and she diagnosed her own condition. Predicting her death, she became a nun at her convent of Mary Full of Grace, following the custom of many pious Byzantines who realized their end was near, and declared that even if she should recover she would not renounce her monastic vows. Tornices, comparing her peaceful death to that of Socrates, describes her taking leave of

[121] See the index in Reinsch and Kambylis, *Annae Comnenae Alexias* II, pp. 266 (*Scylitzes Continuatus*), 266–67 (Psellus), and 268 (Bryennius).

[122] Comnena IX.6.1.

[123] Comnena I.15.6.

[124] Comnena XIII.6.3.

her daughter Irene, who was to inherit the mansion adjoining the convent and appears to have commissioned Tornices' eulogy.[125] Since that eulogy seems to have been delivered in 1154, after some delay, Anna probably died sometime in the middle of 1153, at the age of sixty-nine.[126] By then she had apparently spent almost fifteen years on researching and composing her *Alexiad*.

Although Anna finished writing the narrative, she died before adding a few final touches. Besides some lacunae owing to copyists' errors and damage to our manuscripts, the text has about a dozen blanks that must have been left for information that Anna meant to fill in later. Five of these gaps are for place names, four for personal names, two for dates, and one for a distance. As we might expect, the blanks become somewhat more frequent as the text goes on. Rather surprisingly, one blank is left for the year when Alexius first heard of the approach of the Crusaders (seemingly 1095/96), which Anna must have considered important, since like most formal Byzantine historians she includes very few dates.[127] When she gathered accounts from aging eyewitnesses, no doubt some of them were unable to recall information that she hoped she might learn from other witnesses, or from annals or documents. Yet if she had allowed the *Alexiad* to be copied and distributed, she would presumably have revised it one last time and either filled in the gaps or rewritten the text to remove them. Otherwise the *Alexiad* reads like a finished composition, up to its account of Alexius' death, in Book XV: "Here let our history have its end, so that in recording these painful things we may not become even more bitter."[128]

Anna insists that, apart from being born to an emperor and empress, she was supremely unfortunate.[129] The main misfortunes she lists were the deaths of her father, mother, husband, fiancé, and favorite brother, and the triumph of her "enemies," which caused her virtual exile. In fact, her father died at the age of sixty-one, her mother at seventy-one, and her husband at about fifty-six, all respectable ages by Byzantine standards.[130] Though in her Book XV Anna implies that her mother and husband died soon after her father, they actually outlived

[125] Tornices, *Eulogy*, pp. 311–15. On her daughter Irene, see Darrouzès, *Georges*, pp. 20–21 and 316–17 n. 10; cf. Gautier, "Typikon," p. 139.

[126] See Darrouzès, *Georges*, pp. 20–22 and 226 n. 8.

[127] Place names: Comnena I.6.8, V.5.3, VII.6.6, XIII.1.10, and XV.2.3. Personal names: Comnena VI.13.4, IX.8.4, XII.5.4, and XIV.5.3. Dates: Comnena X.5.4 (the year when Alexius first heard of the Crusaders) and XV.8.1 (the year when the Bogomils appeared). Distance: Comnena XI.2.8.

[128] Comnena XV.11.24.

[129] For her admission that her birth was an exception to her bad luck, see Comnena, preface 4.1; cf. the detailed discussion of Anna's "self-pity" in Buckler, *Anna*, pp. 35–46.

[130] Alexius was born c. 1057, because he was fourteen in spring 1071 and very young in 1078, and he died on August 15, 1118 (Comnena I.1.1, II.1.3, and XV.11.13; Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.29.11, is obviously guessing when he says that Alexius died at roughly the age of 70). If we accept the prophecy of Bishop Nicetas of Chonae, reported in Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 219, that Manuel I, who died at the age of sixty-one years and ten months, had a slightly longer life than his grandfather, Alexius was born between October 1056 and spring 1058. Irene was born soon after April 1066 and died on

Alexius by some twenty years.[131] Anna's fiancé, Constantine Ducas, died at the age of twenty, when she was a child of ten; but she professes great attachment to Nicephorus Bryennius, whom she would presumably not have married if Constantine had lived.[132] Although in Book XV Anna implies that her favorite brother, Andronicus, died very young, on Alexius' campaign against the Turks in 1116, in fact he died around 1131, at the age of about forty.[133] As for her "enemies"—her brother John II and his supporters—John was the rightful heir to the throne according to Byzantine tradition and his father's choice. Given that Anna had been at the head of a plot to murder him, he was entitled at the least to have her tonsured. Instead, advised by his friend Axuch and probably influenced by regard for her husband, John allowed her to keep her property and to live the rest of her long life in luxury with her mother, under restrictions that seem not to have been at all harsh.

Anna's *Alexiad*

The *Alexiad* owes much of its interest and appeal to its main subject—the energetic and charismatic Alexius I. Even though Byzantine historians showed a marked tendency to arrange their material by imperial reigns, surprisingly few of them focused so exclusively on a single emperor as Anna did. The only examples seem to be Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*, two other histories of Constantine I, the *Life of Basil*, probably by Theodore Daphnopates, and the history of Basil II by Theodore of Sebastea.[134] The three histories of Constantine were written in the first half of the fourth century, and two are lost and seem not to have made much impression. Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* found a number of readers but had little influence on historians, even if it had more influence on hagiographers. The tenth-century *Life of Basil* appears to have had a quite limited circulation. Theodore of Sebastea's eleventh-century history of Basil II, apparently composed as a short supplement to the much longer history of Theodore of Side, was lost after reaching few readers. Moreover, the *Life of Constantine* and *Life of Basil* are better termed biographies than histories. Since Anna wrote not a biography but a history centered on a single figure, she followed no obvious precedent.

Alexiad is a similarly anomalous title for a history. In the seventh century George of Pisidia had composed a relatively brief epic poem that he called the

February 19, 1138. (See pp. 347 n. 22 and 349 n. 33 above.) Bryennius was born around 1083 and died late in 1138. (See pp. 345 n. 9 and 347 n. 22 above.)

131 Comnena XV.11.22.

132 See above, pp. 354 and n. 66 (Constantine's birth) and 356 and n. 74 (Constantine's death).

133 Comnena XV.5.4; but Andronicus, born on September 18, 1091 (Schreiner, *Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken* I, p. 55, no. 5.5), died around 1131 (Gautier, "Obituaire," pp. 249–50); cf. *PBW*, Andronikos 108, and Skoulatos, *Personnages*, pp. 17–19.

134 See Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 41–46 (on Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*) and 47–48 (on the lost histories of Constantine I), and above, pp. 165–80 (on the *Life of Basil*) and 247–58 (on Theodore of Sebastea).

Heracliad in honor of the emperor Heraclius, but Anna's work is far longer and in prose. Both Anna and George were of course alluding to Homer's *Iliad*, which they knew well, as most well-educated Byzantines did. Anna quotes the *Iliad* more often than the Bible, and her Homeric allusions are more frequent than her biblical allusions.[135] While the title of the *Iliad* means the epic of Ilium (Troy) rather than of its hero Achilles, Anna's coinage was presumably also influenced by the title of the *Odyssey*, the epic of Odysseus. Alexius was in fact much more like Odysseus, a wily survivor of many perils, than like Achilles, a reckless champion on the battlefield, though Anna would probably have preferred the comparison to Achilles as the more glorious. She quotes many words and phrases from Homer, and her style has much of the epic about it.

Anna's preface, even though composed in formal language with allusions to Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Plutarch, and Polybius, is much less conventional, more personal, and more informative than most prefaces to Byzantine histories. While naturally affirming the importance of her subject, she omits the customary protestations of the writer's inability to do it justice. On the contrary, she mentions her fine education and expresses her concern that readers will think she is biased in favor of her father or will blame her for criticizing him, though she insists that her duty as an historian is simply to tell the truth. She explains that her husband, Nicephorus Bryennius, had been commissioned by the empress Irene to record the deeds of the emperor Alexius but "time did not allow him to continue his history further, thus doing harm to the topic of the history and depriving its readers of pleasure."[136] Anna therefore decided to record her father's deeds herself. She professes to be reduced to tears at recalling the deaths of her husband and her father, which were great misfortunes not only for her but for the whole empire, but she will continue nonetheless.

Book I, largely summarized from Bryennius' history, begins not with Alexius' birth but with his mother's refusing to let him join Romanus IV's campaign of 1071, when he was fourteen. Anna retells the story of how Alexius was sent against the rebel Roussel a few years later and managed to ransom him from the Turks with inadequate funds and to avoid a rebellion by pretending to blind him. Alexius was then sent against the rebel Nicephorus Bryennius, captured him with insufficient troops, and providentially avoided being killed by him afterwards. Sent next against the rebel Nicephorus Basilaces with another inadequate army, Alexius captured him too, completing a third labor of Hercules.[137] Now turning to material that was not in her husband's history, Anna rounds off the book by recording how the emperor Michael VII betrothed his son, Constantine Ducas, to

[135] The index in Reinsch and Kambylis, *Annae Comnenae Alexias* II, pp. 261–62 (Scripture) and 264–65 (Homer), lists 45 scriptural quotations (starred) out of 110 allusions, and 79 Homeric quotations (starred; 61 from the *Iliad* and 18 from the *Odyssey*) out of 126 allusions (96 to the *Iliad* and 30 to the *Odyssey*). Such numbers should not be considered exact but are useful indicators.

[136] Comnena, preface 3.3.

[137] Comnena I.9.6.

the daughter of the Norman Robert Guiscard of Sicily, and after Michael's abdication Robert prepared to invade the empire together with a pretender who claimed to be Michael.

Book II begins with conspiracies in early 1081 that cause Alexius to enlist the Ducas family as his allies and to be proclaimed emperor by his army. He then seizes Constantinople, which his men plunder, and forces the abdication of Nicephorus III. In Book III Alexius takes power and placates his squabbling supporters by distributing new ranks, replacing the patriarch of Constantinople, sending Maria of Alania from the palace, doing penance for his men's sack of the capital, and granting his mother authority over domestic affairs. The book closes with the Normans' landing in imperial territory after losing many of their ships in a storm. Book IV, entirely devoted to the Norman war during 1081, describes Robert Guiscard's siege of Dyrrhachium, the defeat of the Norman fleet by the Byzantines' Venetian allies, and Alexius' march west from Constantinople. He attacks the Normans near Dyrrhachium but suffers a crushing defeat, from which he barely escapes.

Book V opens with the surrender of Dyrrhachium to the Normans early in 1082, which forces Alexius to borrow sacred objects from the Church to continue the war. After Robert returns to Italy and leaves his army with his son Bohemund, Bohemund defeats Alexius—who, however, incites so much dissension among the Norman nobles that he can return to Constantinople in 1083. In the rest of the book Anna goes back to the previous year to describe the heresy trial of John Italus. Book VI returns to 1083 with Alexius' subduing many of the Normans, deporting many Bogomil heretics, and doing penance for his borrowing of church property. Anna skips forward to 1085 to a naval victory of the Venetians over the Normans and the death of Robert Guiscard, which leads to the surrender of Dyrrhachium to Alexius. Then Anna returns to 1083 to record her own birth and the births of her sister Maria in 1085 and her brother John in 1087. The rest of the book describes the occupation of Anatolia by the Turks up to 1092 and raids on Thrace by the Pechenegs up to 1086.

Book VII opens in spring 1087 with the Pechenegs' raiding across the Danube and severely defeating Alexius, who once more barely escapes and can make a truce only because the Pechenegs are attacked by Cuman raiders. After further Pecheneg raiding, Alexius makes another truce, but in 1090 the Pechenegs defeat his forces again. Apparently at the same time, Chaka, the Turkish emir of Smyrna, builds a fleet and takes Lesbos and Chios; but here Anna seems to be confused, because next she reports Alexius' sending his brother-in-law John Ducas against Chaka, which apparently happened in 1093.[138] After the Pechenegs defeat Alexius again, he defeats them, evidently in 1090. In Book VIII Alexius enlists Cuman raiders as allies and inflicts an overwhelming defeat on the Pechenegs in spring 1091. The rest of the book describes an alleged plot against Alexius by his nephew

[138] See below, pp. 371–72.

John Comnenus and the insubordination of Theodore Gabras, the practically independent ruler of Trebizond.

Book IX returns to the dispatch of John Ducas against Chaka, evidently at its correct date of 1093. John retakes Lesbos from Chaka and Crete and Cyprus from Byzantine rebels, and Chaka is killed by the sultan (actually in 1098). Also in 1093, the Serbian ruler Bolkan invades imperial territory and defeats the duke of Dyrrhachium John Comnenus. Apparently the next spring, Alexius marches out and, despite having to suppress a plot by Romanus IV's son Nicephorus Diogenes, makes peace with Bolkan. Book X opens oddly with the condemnation of the heretic Nilus by a church council, an event that had occurred in 1087. Then Anna describes a Pseudo-Diogenes who claims to be a son of Romanus IV and leads a force of Cumans across the Danube, apparently in 1095, but is captured and blinded. Alexius is fortifying the city of Nicomedia against Turkish raiders when he hears the news that the First Crusade is on its way to imperial territory.

In the rest of Book X Anna describes the arrival of the Crusaders, beginning with Peter the Hermit's irregulars, who are followed by regular troops, in late 1096 and early 1097. Relations between Alexius and the Crusaders are tense, but Alexius patiently wins them over, especially his old enemy Bohemund, who is leading the contingent from Norman Sicily. In Book XI the Crusaders advance to besiege Turkish-held Nicaea, whose garrison surrenders to a small Byzantine force to avoid a sacking by the Crusaders. The Crusaders then march to Antioch and take it by treachery, only to be besieged there by a large Turkish army. Meanwhile John Ducas captures the region of Smyrna from Chaka (who according to Anna should already have died), and Alexius conquers central Anatolia. The Crusaders defeat the Turks besieging Antioch and take Jerusalem in 1099. Alexius asks Bohemund to hand over Antioch, which had recently been Byzantine territory, and on his refusal sends an expedition against him. Surrounded by Byzantine forces, Bohemund pretends to be dead and is smuggled out of Antioch in a coffin, in 1104.

In Book XII Bohemund prepares to invade the empire again, and in autumn 1105 Alexius marches into the Balkans to prevent him, returning to the capital only in late 1106.[139] Then Anna describes the conspiracy of the four Anemas brothers, seemingly in 1103, and the rebellion of Gregory Taronites at Trebizond, between 1104 and 1106. Late in 1107, Bohemund finally invades the empire and besieges Dyrrhachium, and this news reaches Alexius at the end of the book. Book XIII is devoted to Alexius' campaign against Bohemund. Anna describes in detail the various devices used unsuccessfully by Bohemund against Dyrrhachium until Alexius sends a relief force that defeats him. At last Bohemund runs short of supplies and sues for peace. Anna completes the book by quoting the lengthy

[139] Comnena XII.3.1 says that Alexius left Constantinople in September 1105, and Comnena XII.4.4 says that he remained in the central Balkans for a year and two months, until the approach of winter, evidently in November 1106, after celebrating the Feast of St. Demetrius (October 26) at Thessalonica on his way back to Constantinople.

text of the treaty between Bohemund and Alexius of September 1108, in which Bohemund agrees to hold Antioch as Alexius' vassal.

Book XIV begins with Bohemund's withdrawal to Apulia and his death, reportedly in 1109. Next Anna describes a successful Byzantine campaign against the Turks in western Anatolia and fruitless attempts to form an alliance with King Baldwin of Jerusalem against Bohemund's nephew Tancred, who continues to hold Antioch. After various ordeals, Alexius, who suffers increasingly from gout, campaigns against the Turks and wins an important victory, apparently in 1113. Anna makes this the occasion for a digression on her historical method. Hearing of a possible Cuman invasion, in fall 1114 Alexius marches to Philippopolis in Thrace, where he stays to convert Bogomil heretics. Book XV begins with raids by the Turks of Anatolia that lead Alexius to launch a major campaign, evidently in 1116, which results in a victory and a favorable peace. Alexius returns with many Byzantines freed from Turkish captivity to the capital, where he lodges many of them in an orphanage he has founded. Next Anna describes the trial for heresy and burning alive of Basil the Bogomil, which must actually have happened years earlier. The book and the *Alexiad* end with a moving account of Alexius' final illness and death.

Contrary to what might be expected of a history written more than twenty years after the events it covers, the *Alexiad* treats the earlier part of Alexius' reign at greater length than the later part. The history is two-thirds over before it reaches the midpoint of Alexius' reign, in 1100. The first three books after Alexius' accession (II–IV) record his first year (1081), while the last two books (XIV–XV) record his last ten years (1109–18). These proportions reflect the fact that most of the *Alexiad* describes Alexius' military campaigns, and Alexius campaigned more during the military crises of the earlier part of his reign than later, when he was increasingly suffering from gout and the empire's military needs were less pressing. Anna gives extensive coverage to the Normans, especially to their two invasions of the region of Dyrrhachium, in 1081–85 and 1107–8; she is less interested in the Crusades, in which Alexius took a comparatively small part. The placement of the book divisions, which are certainly Anna's, is sometimes peculiar.[140] Although Anna obviously realizes the importance of the Crusaders, she reports their arrival without starting a new book in the middle of Book X, and leaves blanks for the year and indiction when Alexius learned that they were coming.[141] Perhaps she was reluctant to give the Crusaders more prominence than necessary.

While Anna evidently arranged her material in roughly chronological order, and dates various events to the year of the indiction, the world, or an imperial reign, or by some other chronological indication, her text often leaves not just the dates but the sequence of events uncertain. Establishing her chronology can be difficult, because many of her references are vague and we seldom have

140 Note that Anna refers to her own book divisions at Comnena I.16.9 and III.12.8.

141 Comnena X.8.5. Possibly Anna was unsure whether Alexius had heard the news before or after the Byzantine year began, on September 1, 1096, though the correct date was presumably before.

sources that are clearly preferable to the *Alexiad*. The main exceptions are our best Western sources for the First Crusade, which show that Anna often reports its events inaccurately; but the reason usually seems to be that she and her Byzantine informants found the Crusade of secondary interest, not that they were biased against the Crusaders.[142] Especially confusing is her mentioning in four different places in Books V and VI the same return of Alexius to Constantinople, in December 1083, as if it were four separate events, and assigning it a date only the last time.[143] The reason is presumably that this was the date when Anna herself was born, and though Alexius had not then won his war with the Normans she wants to give the impression that he had been victorious by describing his later successes before they actually had happened.

The heresy trials of John Italus, Nilus, and Basil the Bogomil, though they receive considerable attention in the *Alexiad*, are all out of their chronological places in Anna's narrative. One reason may be that they would otherwise have interrupted her accounts of Alexius' wars; another reason may be that Anna and the old soldiers who supplied her with information were unable to recall when these events in Constantinople had occurred in relation to the military campaigns.[144] Either of these reasons could explain Anna's placement of the plot of the Anemas brothers after rather than before Alexius' Balkan campaign of 1105 to 1106.[145] Anna may also have wanted to shift more of her material to the later books of her history, when she had fewer campaigns to report, in order to avoid giving the correct impression that Alexius had been less active during the latter part of his reign.

Anna seems particularly confused about Chaka, the Turkish emir of Smyrna, who she says began raiding the islands of the Aegean in 1090. At that time she mentions that John Ducas had been sent against Chaka as grand duke, after serving as duke of Dyrrhachium for eleven years. Since elsewhere she says that the duke of Dyrrhachium was George Palaeologus in late 1081 and John Comnenus in early 1094, John Ducas must have served in that post from 1082 (when the Normans held the city of Dyrrhachium but probably not the whole ducate) to 1093.[146] Anna appears to show further confusion by saying that Chaka was

[142] See especially Lilie, "Erste Kreuzzug," and *Byzantium*, pp. 1–95 and 259–76.

[143] Comnena V.7.4, VI.1.4, VI.3.1, and VI.8.1 (dated).

[144] See Comnena V.8.1 (Italus' trial in 1083 rather than 1082), X.1.1 (Nilus' trial in 1094 or 1095 rather than 1087), and XV.8.1 (Basil's trial around 1117 [but note the blank left by Anna for the year] rather than c. 1105), 8.4 (mentioning the sebastocrator Isaac, who died in 1104), 8.6 (mentioning the patriarch Nicholas III, who died in 1111), and 10.4–5 (calling the imprisonment of Basil's followers after Basil's death "the final deed and ordeal" of Alexius); cf. *PBW*, Ioannes 66, Neilos 15001, and Basileios 179.

[145] Comnena XII.6.3 mentions that the plot was detected by the sebastocrator Isaac, who died in February 1104. (See p. 357 n. 85 above.) *PBW*, Michael 194, dates the plot tentatively to 1103. Cheynet, *Pouvoir*, pp. 100–101, prefers to date it to 1100/1101, because he believes that Anna must have been very young at the time to be so strongly affected by the scene, though I see no need for this to have been so.

[146] Cf. Comnena IV.8.4 (George Palaeologus), VII.8.8–9 (John Ducas and Chaka, whom Anna calls "Tzachas"), and VIII.7.2 (John Comnenus; see *PBW*, Ioannes 128, for the date).

ravaging the islands with his fleet "again" in 1091.[147] Probably his raids continued between 1090 and 1093, when John Ducas arrived and defeated him. Anna's mistake seems to have been to think that Alexius dispatched John Ducas immediately after Chaka started raiding, in 1090, though the actual date was three years later. Then Anna appears to record Chaka's murder by the sultan Kilij Arslan in 1094, only to mention Chaka's still holding Smyrna in 1098.[148] Here Anna's mistake seems to have been to think that Chaka was killed not long after his defeat in 1093, though the actual date was 1098. Probably Anna learned from different old veterans about Chaka's raiding in 1090–93, John Ducas' service at Dyrrhachium in 1082–93, and Chaka's murder in 1098, then combined their chronologically vague reports in her work without properly resolving their inconsistencies.

Anna does appear to have arranged her narrative with some help from an annalistic source or sources. She knows the dates of the reigns of emperors and patriarchs. The only years of the world that she includes (not counting years of the world left blank) are for the accession of Alexius, in 1081, and the accession of the patriarch Nicholas III, in 1084; but she may have used the same annalistic source for Alexius' death, in 1118, the accession of Patriarch Cosmas I, in 1075, the length of Cosmas' patriarchate, and perhaps the birth of Alexius' son John.[149] Since for Alexius' Norman war of 1081–85 she knows six specific dates and the length of the life and reign of Robert Guiscard that marked its end, one of her "artless" written sources may have been a brief and simple chronicle of the war, especially because she records the war at such length.[150] She knows the indictional years of the beginning and end of the not particularly important revolt of Gregory Taronites in Trebizond (1104–6), and of Alexius' departure on campaigns against Bohemund, in 1107, and against the Cumans, in 1114; these she may have found jotted down together somewhere.[151] Otherwise she includes only dates by seasons, months, or saint's days that her informants could have remembered, if not always accurately. For example, her date for the battle in which Alexius crushed the Pechenegs evidently depends on a popular saying that the Pechenegs missed seeing the month of May by one day.[152] Often, however, Anna must have had no

[147] Comnena VIII.3.2.

[148] Cf. Comnena IX.3.4, XI.5.1.

[149] Comnena II.10.4 (A.M. 6589, the 4th indiction [1081]: Alexius' accession), III.2.6 (the 4th year of Michael VII, the 13th indiction [1075]: election of Cosmas), III.4.4 (Cosmas was patriarch 6 yrs. 9 mos. [1075–81]), VI.8.4 (the 11th indiction [1087]: the birth of John II), X.2.5 (A.M. 6592 [1084]: the accession of Patriarch Nicholas III), and XV.11.13 (the 5th indiction [1118]: Alexius' death).

[150] Comnena IV.1.1 (June 17 of the 4th indiction [1081]), IV.4.1 (August of the 4th indiction [1081]), IV.5.2 (October 15 [1081]), IV.6.1 (October 18 of the 5th indiction [1081, since the indiction changed on September 1]), V.4.2 (May [1082]), VI.6.1–2 (Robert ruled 25 years [1059–85] and lived 70 years [perhaps correct]), and VI.8.1 (December 1 of the 7th indiction [1083]).

[151] Comnena XII.7.1 (the 12th indiction [1103/4]), XII.7.2 (the 14th indiction [1105/6]), XIII.1.1 (November 1 of the 1st indiction [1107]), and XIV.8.1 (November of the 8th indiction [1114]).

[152] Comnena VIII.5.8.

obvious place to look for precise dates, though the places she left blank show that she still hoped to be able to fill them in.

We should also realize that, for all her efforts to gather detailed information on Alexius' reign, Anna was not particularly interested in systematic organization or chronology. With the exception of Thucydides, whose influence on Anna was relatively slight, few classical, Hellenistic, or Byzantine historians of their own times had ever cared much about recording specific dates, though world chroniclers were different in this respect. The traditional practice of contemporary historians, which Anna followed, was to use chronological order except when it would have interrupted the flow of the narrative. Her main purposes were to write a satisfactory literary work, to provide a comprehensive and fundamentally accurate picture of Alexius' reign, and to convince her readers that her father had been a great emperor. For these purposes her system of organization was satisfactory. In most cases readers of the *Alexiad* are unlikely to become confused as they read it, unless they subject it to a scrutiny that Anna did not expect it to receive. The narrative is lucid, readable, and interesting, and the story progresses in a logical fashion. These are no small achievements for an account of so many events of different kinds that happened in different places, compiled many years after they had occurred.

The character of the *Alexiad*

Because the *Alexiad* is not really a biography or a panegyric, Anna felt free not to record Alexius' birth or to describe his ancestors, or even to say much about his private life. Though Anna must have been proud of her family, for information on the earlier Comneni she simply refers her readers to Bryennius' history.[153] Yet Alexius is the organizing principle of the *Alexiad*. Events are presented from his point of view, and he is involved or at least interested in almost everything mentioned in the text. Anna identifies herself so closely with her father that she gives the impression that her viewpoint was virtually identical with his. When she says that she resembled him, she primarily means her spirit.[154] The narrative shows that she shared her father's overriding concern with war and politics. Both father and daughter seem to have regarded religion, or at least church councils and heresy trials, largely as an aspect of politics. While he had less enthusiasm for secular learning than she did, education receives little attention in the *Alexiad*. How much their interests may have differed in other respects is hard to judge, since most of what we know about each of them depends on what Anna chose to tell us in her history.

Even more than most Byzantine histories, the *Alexiad* concentrates on warfare. Wars and preparations for war occupy most of its pages. The major battles and sieges in which Alexius took part are described in vivid detail, and a number

[153] Comnena II.1.1; see Bryennius I.1–6.
[154] Comnena VI.8.1.

of technical aspects of warfare, like weapons, armor, battle formations, and siege engines, are carefully explained. Since Anna, even when she accompanied Alexius on campaign, cannot have participated in battles or witnessed them at close quarters, this concentration on warfare has been used to argue that Anna relied on reports drafted by Bryennius.[155] What she seems rather to have done is to combine information from her interviews with Alexius' veterans with what she remembered hearing from her father, her husband, George Palaeologus, and other generals. The result is a skillful feat of research and synthesis, which usually gives a clear idea of how each battle and campaign progressed. Moreover, for a Byzantine historian Anna shows an unusual interest in people and events outside the empire, because Alexius was constantly affected by what happened among the Normans, Germans, Crusaders, Turks, Serbs, Pechenegs, and Cumans.

Anna is much less interested in the army as an institution. In recording her father's wars she includes dozens of numbers of troops, but not the full strength of any Byzantine army except the eight thousand men of the rebel Bryennius in 1078, which she copied from her husband's history.[156] Yet Anna cites large figures for armies of Normans, Crusaders, Turks, Pechenegs, and Cumans, sometimes remarking that they greatly outnumbered the Byzantine army. She says that Robert Guiscard invaded the empire with thirty thousand soldiers in 1081, when Alexius had no force to match it.[157] She records that in 1091 a Byzantine army including five thousand irregulars killed tens of thousands of Pechenegs and captured so many that (including women and children) they outnumbered the Byzantine soldiers who guarded them by thirty to one.[158] Anna says that Alexius knew in 1097 that his whole army was far smaller than the host of the Crusaders, which allegedly included eighty thousand men under Godfrey of Bouillon and fifteen thousand more under an otherwise unattested Raoul, not counting the one hundred eighty thousand men of Peter the Hermit and ten thousand Normans mostly killed by the Turks in 1096.[159] Apparently in 1109, Anna reports that twenty-four thousand Turks hopelessly outnumbered the opposing Byzantine force—which, however, prevailed by attacking them separately when they were divided.[160] Apparently in 1113, she mentions a Turkish army of forty thousand that faced a contingent of just five hundred Byzantines. In 1116 she says the major expedition led by Alexius was greatly outnumbered by the Turks of Iconium, who nevertheless sued for

[155] Howard-Johnston, "Anna," especially p. 275: "[A] second hand, that of a highly placed army officer, contributed to Anna's text."

[156] Cf. Comnena I.5.1 (Bryennius' right wing of 5,000 men and left wing of 3,000 men), with Bryennius IV.6.

[157] Cf. Comnena I.16.1, with III.9.1.

[158] Comnena VIII.5.2 (5,000 irregulars), VIII.5.8 (the number of Pechenegs), and VIII.6.1 (the proportion of captives).

[159] Comnena X.5.10 (Peter the Hermit's 80,000 infantry and 100,000 cavalry), X.6.1 (10,000 Normans), X.9.1 (Godfrey's 10,000 cavalry and 70,000 infantry), X.10.1 (Raoul's 15,000 cavalry and infantry; cf. *PBW*, Raoul 15002), and XI.22 and XIV.4.3 (Alexius' awareness that the Crusaders far outnumbered his army).

[160] Comnena XIV.1.5–7.

peace.[161] Though Anna had probably heard all these figures from someone, only the numbers of Normans and Turks seem credible. Admittedly, most historians tend to overestimate the number of their enemy.

They should, however, have a better idea of the size of their own forces. For various parts of the Byzantine army, Anna gives such numbers as a garrison of only three hundred men in Constantinople in 1081, a company of twenty-eight hundred "Manichaeans" (Bogomils), a company of two thousand Archontopuli (sons of officers), five hundred Flemish mercenaries, five hundred new recruits in 1091, a detachment of twenty thousand men sent to help the Crusaders besiege Nicaea in 1097, and three hundred new officers commissioned in 1107. The largest number Anna mentions for a Byzantine force during Alexius' reign is seven thousand Turkish auxiliaries sent by a Turkish ally in 1082, who never became a permanent unit of the Byzantine army.[162] How big the full establishment of the Byzantine army was in any part of Alexius' reign we can only guess—perhaps typically in the range of twenty to thirty thousand. Even if Anna was unaware of that figure, she must have known roughly how many Byzantine soldiers had gone on some expeditions; but she never tells us. She seems to use numbers mainly to emphasize the great disparity between the enormous forces of the empire's enemies and the small forces of the Byzantines, assuming that this makes her father's defeats more excusable and his victories more brilliant. That the discrepancy may also reveal his failure to maintain an army of adequate size seems not to have occurred to her.

Always obsessed by court politics, Anna shows almost as much interest in the plots against Alexius as in his wars. Besides revolts under Michael VII and Nicephorus III, including Alexius' own, she mentions sixteen conspiracies or acts of disloyalty against her father. Their leaders were the duke of Dyrrhachium, several noble generals, the duke of the Manichaeans, and the duke of Trebizond in 1081, a Manichaean soldier around 1083, the commanders of Crete and Cyprus around 1090, a commander of Trebizond and a Frankish officer in 1091, the duke of Dyrrhachium and the duke of Crete around 1094, the Pseudo-Diogenes in 1095, the Anemas brothers and the duke of Trebizond around 1103, a Bulgarian officer in 1107, and the commander of Acroënus around 1111. Most of this sedition is recorded only by Anna, and we know of just three minor conspiracies against Alexius that she fails to record, not counting Anna's and her mother's plotting around her father's deathbed.[163] She emphasizes her father's clemency to the conspirators, which is well attested, and his refusal to have himself properly

[161] Comnena XIV.5.3–4 (the numbers in 1113) and XV.6.4 (Alexius in 1116).

[162] Comnena III.9.1 (the garrison of 300), IV.4.3 (2,800 Manichaeans), V.5.2 (7,000 Turks), VII.7.1 (2,000 Archontopuli), VII.7.4 (500 Flemish), VIII.1.1 (500 recruits), XI.2.1 (2,000 men sent to Nicaea), and XIII.2.1 (300 new officers).

[163] The references are conveniently collected by Cheynet, *Pouvoir*, pp. 90–103, and discussed on pp. 359–77. (The plots not mentioned by Anna are nos. 120–22 and 134 on pp. 94–95 and 103.) I omit the "revolt" of the Turk Chaka ("Tzachas") listed by Cheynet (no. 118, p. 93), since though Chaka held a Byzantine title, he was not a Byzantine subject.

guarded, which she probably exaggerates. All the conspiracies she mentions were led by military men.

Anna's focus on military officers distinguishes the *Alexiad* from nearly all earlier Byzantine histories. In the *Alexiad* the civil officials, palace eunuchs, patriarchs, bishops, monks, scholars, and other civilians who played influential parts in Byzantine history from the fourth century to the eleventh almost disappear from view. In the years before Alexius' accession, Michael Psellus, the eunuch and logothete Nicephoritzes, and the patriarch John Xiphilinus wielded real political power. Yet among the many people Anna describes as even moderately influential under Alexius not one is a civil official or palace eunuch. Of Alexius' four patriarchs of Constantinople, Anna seldom mentions the first three and never mentions the fourth, John IX Agapetus (1111–34), though he served under Alexius for seven years. The only prominent bishop in the *Alexiad* is Leo of Chalcedon, who irresponsibly criticizes Alexius' confiscations from the Church and is deposed. The most prominent monks are Nilus and Basil the Bogomil, and the most prominent scholar John Italus, all three of whom were condemned for heresy. Anna may have exaggerated the preponderance of military influence in Alexius' empire to some extent, but her implication that military officers were the main group that Alexius cultivated appears to be correct. Since he was never overthrown, and the only ones who even came close to overthrowing him were military men, they seem to have become much more important than civil or palatine officials, patriarchs, or bishops. Zonaras specifically criticizes Alexius for disregarding his civil officials and preferring his relatives.[164]

Unlike some other Byzantine historians, who record the opinions of the citizens of Constantinople and sometimes even agree with them—especially when crowds defended the legitimacy of Constantine VII in 945 and of Zoë and Theodora in 1042—Anna has little patience with commoners. She emphasizes how many people Leo of Chalcedon, Italus, Nilus, and Basil the Bogomil misled, and depicts each condemnation less as a matter of upholding right doctrine than as suppressing a dangerous conspiracy.[165] (She reveals, however, that George Palaeologus thought he had been saved from death on the battlefield by a vision of Leo of Chalcedon.)[166] Once she remarks that "subjects are for the most part disaffected from their rulers but adopt all sorts of pretenses and fawn on the powerful with their flattery."[167] This generalization, which was probably true of many ordinary Byzantines, suggests that Anna had some knowledge of their views, perhaps from her servants and nuns in her convent. While she surely knew many scholars and palace eunuchs and some bureaucrats, monks, and priests, she found scarcely any place for them in her history. Few Byzantine histories tell us less than the *Alexiad* about ordinary people and daily life. She does not have much to say even about Alexius' domestic policies. She devotes a paragraph to his activities in peacetime,

164 Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.29.23–24.
165 Comnena V.2.6 (Leo), V.9.4–6 (Italus), X.1.4 (Nilus), and XV.8.1–3 (Basil).
166 Comnena VII.4.1.
167 Comnena VI.8.4.

which include doing justice to widows and orphans but also reading the Bible, hunting, and playing polo.[168] In Book XV she has more to say about the Orphanage of St. Paul, which Alexius founded, as if she realized she had been neglecting his charitable activities; but she rather implausibly concludes by emphasizing the contribution the orphanage's school made to higher learning.[169] Higher education was an interest of Anna's that her father evidently did not share.

Otherwise Anna's lack of interest in domestic affairs, in the bureaucracy and church hierarchy, and in commoners is probably an accurate reflection of Alexius' own attitudes, which she must often have heard him express. Although circumstances practically compelled him to spend much of his time fighting, had he wished he could safely have assigned more campaigns than he did to other capable generals. Yet he seems to have enjoyed campaigning, or at least thought that he needed to be present to ensure the loyalty of his army and to make sure the most important operations were properly conducted. In comparison with most of his predecessors and successors, Alexius seems not to have cared much about building churches or palaces. He reformed the badly debased coinage, but that was a necessity for paying the army. He appears to have had little time for the bureaucracy, church hierarchy, or population at large, though in order to avoid offending them so much as to risk a major conspiracy or uprising he did penance for his troops' looting Constantinople and for his confiscation of church property.[170] While Anna and her father must have had rather different experiences during his reign, in most respects the *Alexiad* seems to reflect his ideas of what things and which people were most important.

Although Anna naturally saw much more of the women's quarters than Alexius did, the people he considered important included his mother, whom he gave unprecedented power during the first part of his reign, and his wife and daughter, whom he broke with custom by bringing along on campaigns. Zonaras tells us that Alexius came to resent his mother's power, and that early in his marriage his wife resented his love affairs—but also that he respected his mother enough to let her retire voluntarily and that later in his marriage he was strongly attached to his wife.[171] We hear from Nicetas Choniates that Alexius patiently listened to his wife's unwelcome demands that he disinherit his son in favor of Nicephorus Bryennius.[172] While Anna's omitting these differences within the imperial family is understandable, otherwise she says very little about what went on in the women's quarters, mentioning women only when they played a significant part either in politics or in her father's life. We have seen that despite her conventional panegyric Anna seems to have had strong differences of opinion with her grandmother Anna Dalassena and implies disapproval of that matriarch's choice of patriarchs

[168] Comnena XIV.7.5.

[169] Comnena XV.7.4–9. For the little that we know about this orphanage, see Janin, *Géographie*, pp. 399–400.

[170] Comnena III.5.1–5 and VI.3.1–5.

[171] Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.24.8–9 (on Anna Dalassena) and 24.14–15 (on Irene).

[172] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 5–7.

during her administration.[173] The historian pointedly praises her own mother for her great reluctance to appear in public.[174] While Anna loved her mother and would surely have liked to exercise power as the wife of an emperor, she shows no signs of promoting the influence of women as any general principle.[175]

In comparison with other Byzantine historians, Anna pays somewhat more attention to personalities and much more attention to physical descriptions. Like other historians she mentions the personalities and good and bad qualities of the people in her history, but she gives unusual attention to their looks. She describes the appearance not only of her father, mother, husband, and brother, and of Constantine Ducas and Maria of Alania, but of the heterodox philosopher John Italus, the conspirator Nicephorus Diogenes, the Normans Robert Guiscard and Bohemund, and a number of others. Anna herself had probably seen almost all of these except Robert Guiscard and Bohemund, whom her informants had presumably described for her. Nearly all, even Alexius' enemies, are described as remarkably handsome or beautiful, except for Italus and Anna's brother John, who are at least depicted as striking. Anna's descriptions resemble those of the Homeric epics, in which men tend to be heroes or worthy adversaries and women to be worthy consorts or prizes worth fighting for. Thus Anna claims that Bohemund was such an outstanding warrior that only Alexius could have defeated him.[176] A few other descriptions, like those of the imperial crowns and the Purple Room of the empress, enhance the impression that Alexius' reign was an heroic age.[177]

Anna wrote in an Atticizing Greek somewhat less difficult and considerably less correct than that of Psellus. She uses tenses and moods indiscriminately, making almost no distinction between the perfect and the aorist (simple past), and she frequently violates various other classical rules of grammar and syntax.[178] The reason for her lapses from classical usage, at least some of which must be unintentional, was probably that instead of being drilled in the rules of classical grammar at a regular school she had learned from respectful tutors who taught her only what she wanted to learn. She evidently did not mind writing Greek that is sometimes more Homeric, scriptural, or patristic than classical, but her language is scarcely

[173] See above, p. 357.

[174] Comnena XII.3.2–7.

[175] For a contrasting view, see Hill, "Vindication," and "Actions."

[176] Comnena, preface 3.1 and 4.1 (Bryennius), I.10.4 (Guiscard), I.12.3 and III.1.3 (Constantine Ducas), III.2.4 (Maria of Alania), III.3.1–4 (Alexius and Irene), V.8.8 (Italus), VI.7.6 (Guiscard again), VI.8.5 (John II), IX.6.5 (Diogenes), and XIII.10.4–5 (Bohemund). For whatever reason, or by inadvertence, Anna never describes the physical appearance of Anna Dalassena.

[177] Comnena III.4.1(crowns) and VII.2.4 (Purple Room).

[178] The best discussion of Anna's style and language is still in Buckler, *Anna*, pp. 481–516, which can now be supplemented by the extensive indices of Greek words and usage in Reinsch and Kambylis, *Annae Comnenae Alexias* II, pp. 83–259. Cf. also Browning, "Language," p. 120: "In spite of her outstanding talent as a writer, the classicizing language which she uses, and which she handles without the creative imagination necessary, is a hindrance rather than a help to her. Much of what she has to say lacks clarity, and probably lacked it for the educated élite for whom she wrote her *History*."

ever colloquial. She abstains from the dual number until the middle of Book I, when she uses it seven times to compare Alexius to her husband's grandfather before reverting to the plural; she uses the dual less obtrusively in the rest of the *Alexiad*.[179] Her style shows the influence of the elegantly convoluted constructions of Psellus, but it reveals that her education was inferior to his.

Anna's style is erudite and difficult, but her meaning can almost always be determined with a little effort. While frequently inserting classicisms like "Persians" for Turks, "Celts" for Normans, or "Scyths," "Dacians," or "Sarmatians" for Pechenegs, she calls peoples by their contemporary names often enough to make clear who they actually were. Her Hellenizations of Latin and Turkish names are usually not so drastic that we cannot identify them, though she confusingly uses the name "Bryennius" for a Norman who was perhaps the count of Brienne.[180] She generally calls Constantinople, Adrianople, and Dyrrhachium by those names, but reminds us that they had once been called Byzantium, Orestias, and Epidamnus. She quotes a popular jingle praising Alexius' ingenuity, but she carefully translates it into literary Greek in case an ancient Athenian should return from the dead to read it.[181] She makes no attempt to substitute classical equivalents for most Byzantine titles and technical terms, or even for some Western titles and terms like constable, liege, or sergeant. She tells us how sorry she is to need to use "barbarian" names, but observes that Homer does it too.[182]

If Anna's style falls short of Atticizing perfection, her literary references are perhaps the most impressive of any Byzantine historian. The *Alexiad* draws quotations or allusions from the histories of Polybius, Theophylact, Scylitzes, and Bryennius, the plays of Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes, the novels of Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus, the orations of Demosthenes, the sermons of John Chrysostom, a poem of Sappho, and various works of Aristotle and Plutarch, besides Psellus, Homer, and the Bible. Anna adds more oblique references to many other authors.[183] Her knowledge of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Plutarch, whom she had presumably read in her youth, is admittedly a bit rusty. She refers to Cyrus instead of Darius in a story from Herodotus, substitutes Alcibiades for Themistocles in a story from Thucydides, and turns the Sacred Band of three hundred Thebans in Plutarch into two thousand Spartans.[184] Even if she knew many passages from Homer, the Bible, and Psellus by heart, she must have written with copies of the histories of Psellus, Scylitzes, and Bryennius on hand. She largely

[179] Comnena I.5.1 (τὼ μὲν γὰρ ἄνδρε τούτω καὶ ἄμφω ἤστην καλὼ καὶ γενναίω. ...). For other uses of the dual, see Reinsch and Kambylis, *Annae Comnenae Alexias* II, p. 227.

[180] Comnena V.6.1–7.1, etc.; cf. *PBW*, Bryennios 102.

[181] Comnena II.4.9.

[182] Comnena VI.14.1, X.8.1 (her reference to Homer), and XIII.6.3. Cf. Reinsch and Kambylis, *Annae Comnenae Alexias* II, pp. 154 (κονοσταῦλος), 158 (λίζιος), and 198 (σεργέντιος).

[183] For the authors cited, see the passages marked as probable quotations in Reinsch and Kambylis, *Annae Comnenae Alexias* II, pp. 261–71 (indicated by asterisks). See also the remarks on Anna's allusions in Buckler, *Anna*, pp. 191–208.

[184] Comnena VI.10.11 (cf. Thucydides I.90–91), VII.7.1 (cf. Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 18), and X.4.1 (cf. Herodotus III.154–58).

copies the episodes in her husband's history concerning Alexius' dealings with the rebels Roussel, Bryennius, and Basilaces under Michael VII.[185] Later she copies most of an account of Isaac I's Pecheneg campaign of 1059 from Psellus and adds passages on Isaac's church of St. Thecla from the supplemented edition of Scylitzes' history, which her husband seems not to have known.[186] Such copying was of course standard practice for Byzantine historians.

Anna also includes some of the historical, geographical, and other digressions that were a customary feature of classicizing histories. Her own digressions are relatively few, fairly short, not very distracting, and more or less relevant to her subject. Once in Book I, Anna remarks of a digression, like the horsewoman she probably was, "Enough of that: the horse of history has strayed from the highway, and since he has become unbridled let us bring him back to his original road."[187] She makes room for her encomium of her grandmother chiefly in order to defend Alexius' giving his mother so much power.[188] Anna includes a digression on prophecies mostly to justify her own knowledge of astrology by expressing a qualified skepticism; but some of the prophecies in the *Alexiad* come true, including the prediction of the death of Robert Guiscard that introduces this digression.[189] Her description of her historical method is designed to show that her account of Alexius' wars is reliable.[190] She allows herself only brief digressions on the Purple Room, Nicephorus Bryennius the Elder, the lake called Ozolimne, the crossbow, the region of Dyrrhachium, Norman armor, Philippopolis, and the Balkan Mountains.[191] All these digressions fit smoothly into her narrative, and none of them is allowed to distract the reader from concentrating on Alexius.

Invented speeches were another attribute of classicizing histories that Anna, unlike some of her predecessors, uses sparingly. Alexius and others often speak in direct discourse in the *Alexiad*, but never at much length and always to the point. In Book I Anna slightly revises three speeches ascribed to Alexius in her husband's history.[192] She attributes other noteworthy speeches to Robert Guiscard when he begins his campaign against Dyrrhachium, and later when he transfers

[185] Comnena I.1.3–3.1 (cf. Bryennius II.22–23), I.4.2–6.1 (cf. Bryennius IV.5–10), and I.7.3–9.6 (cf. Bryennius IV.18–29). See above, p. 347, for Bryennius' knowledge of Scylitzes.

[186] Cf. Comnena III.8.6–10, with Psellus, *Chronography* VII.67 and 70, and *Scylitzes Continuatus*, pp. 107–8.

[187] Comnena I.16.7.

[188] Comnena III.7.1–8.5.

[189] Comnena VI.7.1–5; cf. Comnena VI.6.1–2 (another prophecy of Robert's death), X.5.7 (a plague of locusts that showed the Crusaders would harm Muslims but not Christians), and XII.4.1 (a comet that presaged a Norman invasion).

[190] Comnena XIV.7.3–7.

[191] Comnena VII.2.4 (the Purple Room), VII.2.5–7 (Bryennius the Elder), VII.5.2–3 (Ozolimne [perhaps in the Danube Delta, which may have included a larger lake in Anna's time than in ours]), X.8.6 (the crossbow), XII.9.4–6 (the region of Dyrrhachium), XIII.8.2 ("Celtic" armor), XIV.8.3 (Philippopolis), and XIV.8.4–8 (the Balkan Mountains).

[192] Comnena I.2.2 (cf. Bryennius II.21), I.2.5 (cf. Bryennius II.22), and I.2.7 (cf. Bryennius II.23).

the command of his army to Bohemund.[193] Alexius is given important speeches when he defends his appropriation of sacred objects, encourages his men to attack the Pechenegs, and announces his discovery of the conspiracy of Nicephorus Diogenes.[194] On the whole, however, Anna invents dialogue more often than she invents speeches, and she never allows a speech to become tedious or to interrupt her narrative for long.

Anna also invents some texts of letters, which she qualifies with phrases such as "they said something like this" to distinguish them from genuine documents.[195] When she omits such a qualification, as she does for a quite circumstantial letter from Alexius to the German emperor Henry IV, the text may very well be genuine.[196] Following a tradition that went back to peace treaties in Thucydides, Anna includes at least two authentic documents, Alexius' chrysobull of 1081 granting his mother authority over domestic affairs and Alexius' treaty of 1108 with Bohemund.[197] This treaty was one of Alexius' greatest successes, even if it never went into full effect. Anna may simply have included the chrysobull of 1081 as an interesting document composed by Alexius. Because Alexius must have left many more documents of comparable interest, we should not assume that Anna had full access to the archives. Nonetheless, her ability to quote these government records shows that she still had some well-placed connections after her husband's death.

Because Anna was an exceptionally intelligent and well-informed twelfth-century Byzantine, her mistakes and misunderstandings are instructive. Some of them are relatively trivial and show nothing more than that she lacked comprehensive and accurate reference books. She conjectures that the Blue chariot-racing faction (pronounced *véneton*) was named for the Venetians, with whom it had nothing to do. She calls Thessalonica the city "of the Thessalians," though despite its name (for a Macedonian queen) it was and is in Macedonia, not Thessaly. She declares that Great Preslav was originally a Greek city named *Megalē* ("Great"), to which the Bulgarians added the Slavic name Preslav. She says that Philippopolis was founded by the Roman emperor Philip the Arab on the site of the ancient town of Crenides, though Philippopolis was actually founded by Philip II of Macedon, who also founded the different city of Philippi on the site of the ancient town of Crenides.[198] Yet not even consulting a copy of the *Suda* could have helped Anna avoid such mistakes. Psellus makes worse errors in his *Concise History*, though admittedly he wrote it much more hastily and carelessly than Anna did the *Alexiad*.

193 Comnena IV.5.5–7 and V.3.5.

194 Comnena VI.3.3–4 (on church treasures), VIII.1.4 (on the Pechenegs), and IX.9.4 (on Diogenes).

195 E.g., Comnena II.8.1–2 (οὑτωσί πως διεξιούσας) and VIII.7.4–5 (τοιαῦτα διαλαμβάνουσαν).

196 Comnena III.10.2–8 (note the specific sums of money); see Kresten, "Auslandsschreiben," pp. 23–37, arguing that the letter is genuine.

197 Comnena III.6–7 (the chrysobull) and XIII.12 (the treaty).

198 Comnena IV.2.2 (the Blues and Venetians), IV.7.2 (Thessalonica), VII.3.4 (Great Preslav), and XIV.8.2 (Philippopolis).

A few of Anna's other errors appear to show misconceptions common among even well-educated Byzantines of her time. She asserts that the Council of Chalcedon had granted the patriarch of Constantinople primacy over the papacy, though any knowledgeable Byzantine churchman should have known that the council had put Constantinople just after Rome.[199] She declares that Muslims worshipped the goddesses Astarte and Astaroth and revered "the sign of the star" (the moon?) and "the golden Khobar" (the black Kaaba?).[200] She also claims that the Roman empire had once stretched from the arctic to the tropics and from the Pillars of Hercules to the "Pillars of Dionysus, which lie near the boundary of India." Rome had indeed ruled as far as the Pillars of Hercules (the Straits of Gibraltar), and the "Pillars of Dionysus" cannot be securely identified. Yet Anna's idea that the Roman frontier had once approached India fits uncomfortably well with her persistent confusion of Iraq with Khorasan (northeastern Persia). Her styling the Seljuks "Persians" may have helped to muddle her geography, because the Sassanid Persians had ruled both Iran and Iraq, as the Seljuk Turks did in her day. Like Leo the Deacon, Anna seems to have conflated Iraq and Iran.[201]

In other cases Anna presumably knew the facts but distorted them for effect. She strongly implies that Alexius' victory over the "Scythian" Pechenegs in 1091 exterminated them as a people, which is not only an absurd exaggeration but inconsistent with her references to companies of "Scythians" at a later date.[202] We should also be skeptical of her assurances that Alexius humanely rejected the advice of his officer Synesius to kill his dangerously numerous Pecheneg prisoners of war, since when all of them were killed, supposedly in violation of the emperor's orders, he punished Synesius only symbolically.[203] Later Anna implies that not just Bohemund and his Normans but all the Crusaders except Peter the Hermit only pretended to be going to Jerusalem, "and in fact wanted to deprive the emperor of his empire and to conquer his capital." To support her assumption, she describes an unsuccessful Crusader attack on Constantinople on Holy Thursday (April 2) of 1097 that must be an exaggeration of a minor clash, if indeed any fighting happened at all.[204] Anna's excessive suspicion of the First Crusade is mostly due to her justified suspicion of the Normans, who certainly did have designs on Byzantium.

Anna further claims that Alexius took over the empire when it extended only from the Bosporus to Adrianople and left it stretching from the Adriatic Sea to the Tigris and the Euphrates.[205] Byzantium had, however, reached the Adriatic at

[199] Comnena I.13.4.

[200] Comnena X.5.7.

[201] Cf. Comnena VI.11.3 (the "Pillars of Dionysus"), with VI.12.4 (Baghdad identified as Khorasan), XI.4 (Mosul identified as Khorasan), and XI.8 (the Crusaders' plan to march to Khorasan, presumably meaning Iraq). For the geographical confusion of Leo the Deacon, see above, pp. 243–44.

[202] Cf. Comnena VIII.5.8, with XII.8.4, XIII.6.1, XV.6.1, etc.

[203] Comnena VIII.6.1–2.

[204] Comnena X.9.1 and X.9.5–9; cf. Lilie, "Erste Kreuzzug," pp. 55–61.

[205] Comnena VI.11.3.

Alexius' accession, even if Alexius had yet to establish full control over the empire, and at no time during his reign did Byzantine territory reach either the Tigris or the Euphrates, though it would almost have reached the Euphrates if Alexius' treaty of 1108 had secured Byzantine control over Antioch. Later Anna maintains that in a treaty in 1116 the sultan of Iconium accepted Alexius' demand to evacuate all of Anatolia.[206] That the sultan agreed to any such treaty is incredible, though Anna may have thought that the sultan's subsequent murder made her overstatement hard to refute. Somewhat later Anna makes the confusing observation, "After [the reign of Romanus IV], no emperor, except for a few (I mean [John I] Tzimisces and Basil [II]), dared to set foot in Asia [Minor] at all until my father."[207] John I and Basil II had reigned long before Romanus IV, and after Romanus just Michael VII and Nicephorus III had reigned before Alexius. Perhaps Anna at first wrote, accurately, that neither of those two emperors had campaigned in Anatolia (though Nicephorus had campaigned there before his accession). Then, realizing that this was faint praise of Alexius, she may have tried to make him look better by a confused comparison with the great emperors John I and Basil II.

Of course the *Alexiad*, as its title implies, is the epic of Alexius. Anna's argument that it can nonetheless be an accurate history is logically sound: if a man is praiseworthy, an historian can praise him and still tell the truth. Anna insists in Book XV, "I have undertaken to write the true story of a good man."[208] She was certainly right that at his accession Alexius had inherited a badly damaged empire, which was threatened by the Turks in the East and the Normans in the West and severely short of both troops and money. She cites old soldiers who, apparently reporting what they had heard from even older men, said that the empire's cities had never been in such a wretched condition.[209] She adds a plausible report that Alexius had found the treasury ruined by the irresponsible expenditures of Nicephorus III, and her remark that no one even bothered to lock the treasury doors can be excused as literary hyperbole.[210] Anna's claim that no previous emperor had faced such a serious crisis is defensible, since even Heraclius, Constans II, and Leo III had confronted the threat of the empire's collapse with stronger armies and more resources than Alexius commanded.[211]

Anna insists in her preface and in Book XIV that she will criticize Alexius whenever he deserves it.[212] Opportunities to criticize him seem, however, to have eluded her. Even when she reports that Alexius felt the greatest remorse for his troops' sack of Constantinople in 1081, she insists that he bore no responsibility whatever.[213] While no doubt Alexius was dismayed at his men's looting his own

[206] Comnena XV.6.5–6.
[207] Comnena XV.10.5.
[208] Comnena XV.3.4.
[209] Comnena III.9.1.
[210] Comnena V.1.4.
[211] Comnena XIV.7.1.
[212] Comnena, preface 2.2, and XIV.7.3.
[213] Comnena III.5.1–3.

capital, not even Anna implies that he made much of an effort to stop them. His first priority was, understandably, to seize power, and before doing that he could hardly afford to alienate his own soldiers by trying to punish them or to make them return their loot. She acknowledges that many people blamed him for his confiscations of church property; but she claims, somewhat inconsistently, that he had needed the money desperately and that he had taken scarcely anything.[214] The first of these justifications is much more plausible than the second, given the emptiness of the treasury and the necessity of mounting an expensive defense against the Normans at once.

In Book XV Anna mentions that at the time of his campaign in 1116 many people blamed Alexius for not retaking more of Anatolia from the Turks. She insists that the emperor was eager to attack the Turkish capital at Iconium. On the other hand, she says that the sultan had burned all available supplies; a priest, told to choose one of two papers from an altar, chose one saying that the Byzantines should not go to Iconium; the Byzantines won a great victory anyway; the Turkish army still outnumbered them; and finally the sultan agreed to cede all of Anatolia to the empire, though afterwards he was unfortunately murdered.[215] Here Anna's justifications are too numerous to be entirely convincing. A skeptical reader may even suspect that the priest had been given two papers with the same message. In 1095 Alexius had asked the patriarch Nicholas to choose one of two papers to decide whether to march against the Pseudo-Diogenes, and the favorable answer allowed the emperor to campaign despite the supposedly unanimous advice of his officers.[216] Allowing the Turks to establish themselves securely in central Anatolia was in fact the greatest failure of Alexius' reign. Nonetheless, Anna makes a strong case that her father was a good general and a masterful politician, who survived danger after danger year after year and slowly nursed a gravely weakened state back to health.

The suggestion has been made that one of Anna's main preoccupations in writing the *Alexiad* was criticism of John II and especially of his son Manuel I, the two emperors under whom she wrote.[217] Anna certainly hated both of them, though she bore a more personal grudge against John. She plainly expresses her belief that both John and Manuel had stupidly thrown away the gains Alexius had made, and that Manuel's reign was a time "when everyone flatters the prevailing power."[218] On the other hand, she could have done little to turn knowledgeable readers against John or Manuel by emphasizing Alexius' successes against the Crusaders and Seljuk Turks, his disdain for astrology, or his mother's strict morals. Anna herself shows almost as much interest in astrology as Manuel did; John

[214] Comnena VI.3.1–3.

[215] Comnena XV.3.1 (the criticism), 4.3–4 (Alexius' eagerness to go to Iconium, the burned crops, and the two papers), and 6.1–10 (the victory, the superior Turkish forces, the peace, and the sultan's murder).

[216] Comnena X.2.5.

[217] See Magdalino, "Pen."

[218] Comnena XIV.3.8 and 7.5.

and Manuel were almost as successful as Alexius in dealing with the Crusaders and Turks; and, puritanical though his mother may have been, the young Alexius had been as notorious a philanderer as Manuel.[219] Moreover, Anna had no reason to think her history would find more than a handful of readers under Manuel; it was her good fortune (and ours) that it survived at all. Anna's main purpose in composing the *Alexiad* was obviously to glorify her father for his own sake, and for hers as his historian.

While the *Alexiad* is our best source for the reign of Alexius almost by default, it is a splendid history in its own right. It provides us with a highly detailed and generally reliable account of Alexius' wars and gives us a unique depiction of the life and preoccupations of a Byzantine emperor and his family and advisers. Like Psellus in his *Chronography*, Anna presents personalities who seem entirely real, though not always sympathetic. Her treatment of the Normans, Crusaders, and Turks is unfavorable but perceptive. While her concerns are mainly limited to wars, conspiracies, and the military aristocracy, most bureaucrats who had written histories before her had shown much less understanding of warfare, conspiracy, and the empire's generals. Although her chronology is often vague, that is a common failing of formal Byzantine histories. The steadiness of her focus is impressive, if sometimes a little disturbing. She includes very few variant accounts in her narrative, and her assurances that her oral sources never disagreed with each other are hard to believe.[220] Yet historians need to have a point of view if they are to combine their facts and impressions into a coherent account. The *Alexiad* is only one of a number of notable histories from antiquity to the present that maintain, often with good reason, that a single ruler or general had a decisive effect on his times.

A great history needs a great subject, and Anna's was Alexius. In the *Alexiad* she achieves something rare in Byzantine literature: a plausibly favorable portrait of an historical figure. While the Byzantines wrote many persuasive criticisms and condemnations of emperors and others, their panegyrics were deliberately conventional and not historical, even when they appeared in histories. No intelligent Byzantine reader would have thought that Psellus' encomium of Michael VII or Attaliates' encomium of Nicephorus III was sincere or accurate. Some Byzantine saints' lives, usually those written by hagiographers who had known the saints personally, make a credible case that the saints had been admirable people who were devoted to the service of God. Yet most secular historians, especially when they wrote about emperors, either criticized candidly or followed the traditional form of the vacuous panegyric. Far from depicting Alexius as a superman who

[219] Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.24.14.

[220] The only variants seem to be two versions of how the monk who claimed to be Michael VII appeared at the court of Robert Guiscard (Comnena I.12.6–10), the rumor rejected by Anna that Alexius was thinking of marrying Maria of Alania (Comnena III.2.1), and Anna's uncertainty about whether the Comneni agreed to recognize Maria's son as Alexius' heir before or after their revolt (Comnena III.4.6). See Comnena XIV.7.4 for her assurances that her veterans never disagreed.

advanced from victory to victory admired by all, as a conventional encomium would have done, Anna generally avoids listing his virtues and virtuous deeds, and instead relates his many hardships and the means by which he overcame them. While she sometimes makes him appear more successful and admirable than he must have been in reality, she also shows that he suffered many defeats, had many enemies, and sometimes survived only by luck or guile. As a result, he appears human and sympathetic as well as decent and capable.

With Alexius at its center, the *Alexiad* tells its story clearly and well, with few of the abrupt transitions found in most Byzantine histories. Anna also had the advantages of recording events from her lifetime, not needing to flatter the current ruler, composing a single homogeneous edition, being familiar with excellent models, and researching and writing carefully for a number of years. Most other Byzantine historians either praised the reigning emperor or made pastiches of earlier histories, and had read far less and written more quickly and carelessly than Anna had. Psellus had surely read more books than Anna, but probably fewer histories. He certainly wrote with more speed and less care, and in two editions, one of them badly distorted by his fawning on Michael VII. Anna avoided his faults and was inspired by his merits, particularly his interest in characterization. If her history, like his, had a limited circulation, the main reasons were probably its difficult style and specialized subject, since most Byzantines who read histories of such a length wanted to learn about more than a single reign. She also seems to have died before producing copies of her work, which would in any case have been hard to distribute widely under Manuel I. Yet the *Alexiad* found a select and discriminating audience, and survived to pass on a new style of contemporary historiography that had begun with Psellus and was to continue with Nicetas Choniates.

11
Anna Comnena's Contemporaries

In the middle of the twelfth century, after an interval of comparative quiescence, Byzantine historiography regained its vigor. Before Nicephorus Bryennius died leaving his history unfinished, in 1138, Byzantine writers had produced only two histories over more than fifty years: the world chronicles by John Scylitzes and George Cedrenus, who say nothing about the reigns of the two emperors under whom they wrote. By contrast, during the fifty years beginning with 1138, seven histories appeared, including those of Bryennius and Anna Comnena. Three of these were world chronicles, but six dealt partly or entirely with contemporary events. Moreover, to judge from the number of our surviving manuscripts, the three world chronicles were among the most popular of the whole Byzantine period. All seven histories were substantial works, and one of them was the longest to be written in middle Byzantine times. Thus Byzantine historians and readers of history seem to have been relatively abundant during this prosperous, momentous, and ultimately disastrous period.

While Nicephorus Bryennius and Anna Comnena belong to this group chronologically, otherwise they stand apart from the other five historians. While three of the five drew on the works of their predecessors, none of them made any significant use of the histories of Nicephorus or Anna, though Nicephorus seems to have written earlier than all of them, and Anna earlier than at least three of them. Nicephorus and Anna, in comparison with the five historians who were their contemporaries, wrote history of a different and more sophisticated kind. Nicetas Choniates, who wrote some twenty years later than the last of these seven historians, modeled his history on those of Nicephorus and Anna but not on the five other histories, even though Nicetas used two of the five as sources. On the other hand, each of the five more conventional historians has his distinctive characteristics and virtues, as a writer if not necessarily as an historian. All of them also contributed to a more general revival of literature under the Comneni, which included oratory, epistolography, theology, poetry, novels, satire, and scholarship.[1]

[1] This literary revival, which had its counterpart in art and architecture, awaits its historian, though Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change*, Kazhdan, *Studies*, Magdalino, *Empire*, and Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, all discuss aspects of it.

John Zonaras

John Zonaras' *Epitome of Histories*, which begins with the Creation and concludes with 1118, is the longest history written in Greek up to its time that has reached us intact.[2] While we know that Zonaras was a high-ranking bureaucrat who later became a monk, reconstructing his life is complicated, because most of his work is derivative, and his references to himself are few and vague. Apparently while he was still a junior official, he was commissioned by an emperor to write an extensive commentary on canon law, which still survives.[3] Zonaras also wrote several poems, speeches, and commentaries on religious subjects, some of which remain unedited, and he may have compiled a lengthy lexicon, though its authorship is disputed. The most complete form of the title of his history calls him "John Zonaras, former drungary of the Watch and protoasecretis, who was a monk in the holy monastery of the island of St. Glyceria."[4] Presumably Zonaras became protoasecretis before he held the still higher office of drungary of the Watch, then became a monk on St. Glyceria, a small island in the Sea of Marmara, not far from Constantinople.

In his preface, which he must have composed last, Zonaras says that he had "long ago" retired voluntarily to his monastery after God "broke my bonds by depriving me of those dearest to me." The plural evidently means that he had been widowed and lost at least one child, because only a marriage bond would have made him ineligible to enter a monastery, while only a child would have been as close to him as a wife and needed his presence. Zonaras confesses that for some time after his tonsure he did nothing in particular, implying that he was demoralized and wrote nothing. His friends, however, urged him to use his leisure to compile a summary of previous histories that would have literary merit but would omit the detailed descriptions and invented speeches that they considered useless distractions.[5] These friends may have visited him on St. Glyceria or written letters to him there; or perhaps some of them were monks there themselves. Zonaras says that he resisted them at first, because of the labor and the many books that the task would require, but finally he agreed, worn down by his

[2] On Zonaras, whose long and problematic history needs further study, see Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* III, pp. 465–89, Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 416–19, Beck, *Kirche*, pp. 655–57, Banchich and Lane, *History* (for Zonaras on the third and fourth centuries), Bleckmann, *Reichskrise* (for Zonaras on the third century, now mostly superseded by Banchich and Lane), Trapp, *Militärs*, pp. 9–22 (for Zonaras on the tenth and eleventh centuries), Konrat Ziegler in *RE* XA (1972), cols. 718–32 (with cols. 732–63 by Klaus Alpers on the lexicon attributed to Zonaras, which Alpers believes is by someone else), Grigoriadis, *Linguistic and Literary Studies* (arguing on pp. 183–208 that the lexicon may well be by Zonaras), and Heinemann, *Quaestiones* (old but still useful).

[3] Zonaras, *Commentary*, ed. Rhalles and Potles, *Σύνταγμα* II, pp. 1–2. (Cf. the comments of Banchich and Lane, *History*, p. 4.)

[4] See P. Leone, "Tradizione," p. 234; the MS is *Ambrosianus graecus* 411.

[5] I am not persuaded by the argument of Afinogenov, "Some Observations," that Zonaras' preface was designed to criticize George the Monk. Zonaras seems not to have consulted George's chronicle at all.

friends' persistence and realizing that his idleness was endangering his spiritual welfare.[6] His preface gives no indications of dates.

Zonaras' *Epitome of Histories* becomes an independent source only with 1079, and for some time before that it relies mainly on the histories of Psellus and Scylitzes, both of which Zonaras cites by name.[7] He shows no sign of being aware of the histories of Attaliates, Bryennius, or Anna Comnena, which he would presumably have used for the final part of his *Epitome* if he had known of them. Zonaras' preface includes a brief summary of his whole history that ends with the remark, "Thus my work concludes its narrative, reaching those who were emperors in my time."[8] Since he concludes with the death of Alexius I, in 1118, putting these "emperors" in the plural implies that Zonaras had lived under at least one emperor before Alexius I, and was therefore born no later than the short reign of Nicephorus III (1078–81), and more probably under Michael VII (1071–78). Besides, Zonaras mentions in his commentary on the canons that he had once "seen" the celebration of the second marriage of an emperor. Except on the arbitrary and unlikely assumption that this is a later interpolation, it must mean the second marriage of Nicephorus III, around the end of 1079; the second marriage of Manuel I, in 1161, came too late, especially for a work written before Zonaras' retirement, and no other such marriage occurred between 1079 and 1161.[9] If Zonaras could remember seeing a wedding celebration at the end of 1079, he could scarcely have been born much later than 1074.

As for the date when he wrote his *Epitome*, Zonaras remarks on the events of 1118, "It used to be said by the emperor himself, [John II] the Porphyrogenitus, and by others, that he had not made his entrance into the palace without the consent of his father, but that this outcome was granted to [John] by [Alexius I], and that as a sign of it [John] took [the emperor's] ring from his father."[10] This statement suggests both that John II was dead when Zonaras wrote and that Zonaras had served in John's administration in a capacity that allowed him to hear what the emperor and his advisers said. Moreover, in a short conclusion to his *Epitome*, Zonaras explains that he has chosen to stop with 1118 "because I have judged it neither advantageous nor opportune to commit the remaining

[6] Zonaras, *Epitome*, preface 1–2, pp. 3–9. Ziegler in *RE* XA (1972), cols. 720–21, hypothesizes that Zonaras' retirement was not voluntary, as Zonaras says it was, but the result of his having favored the succession of Nicephorus Bryennius and Anna Comnena in 1118 or 1119; but this seems implausible, because Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.28.21, supports John II's claim to the throne, and Zonaras' expressed opinion of Alexius I is much less favorable than Anna's.

[7] Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.7.2 (Psellus), XVIII.7.5 ("the Thracesian," which must mean Scylitzes), and XVIII.15.5 (Psellus).

[8] Zonaras, *Epitome*, preface 4, p. 15.9–10 (καθ' ἡμᾶς); cf. Zonaras XIII.3.26, describing the statue of Constantine I as having stood on its column "until our times [μέχρις ἡμῶν]" after it fell on April 5, 1106 (cf. Comnena XII.4.5), surely within Zonaras' lifetime.

[9] Zonaras, *Commentary*, ed. Rhalles and Potles, *Σύνταγμα* III, p. 80. (Cf. the comments of Banchich and Lane, *History*, pp. 6–7, where their reference is misprinted as "II, p. 80.") For the date of the marriage, see above, p. 328 and n. 86.

[10] Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.28.21.

events to writing."[11] Therefore Zonaras had enough information to continue his work into John's reign, but by doing so might have displeased either his friends, other influential people who had been active under John, or perhaps John's son Manuel I. We may plausibly conclude that Zonaras disliked the way the empire had been governed during John's reign. Because Zonaras, like most Byzantine historians, arranges his material by reigns, he would probably have felt no need to explain why he ended his history with 1118 had he finished writing before John II's death, in 1143. If Zonaras was born around 1074, he was then nearing seventy. This seems quite possible, though had he been born much earlier than 1074 he would probably not have undertaken a task he finished only after 1143.[12] Since he completed his history in time for Constantine Manasses to use it for his own history, around 1150, Zonaras must have finished writing around 1145.[13]

The Zonaras family were not aristocratic landowners—their name means "Beltmaker," presumably the profession of an ancestor—but neither were they altogether obscure.[14] They may have been successful Constantinopolitan merchants who entered the bureaucracy. A Zonaras appears in our sources as early as 945, as an assistant to an allegedly corrupt prefect of Constantinople.[15] In the late eleventh century a Nicholas Zonaras attended a church council in 1088 as a judge of the Hippodrome and grand chartulary. This is presumably the same Nicholas Zonaras who is attested on a contemporary seal as a judge of Thrace and Macedonia, at a somewhat earlier stage of his career.[16] A seal dated to the late eleventh century belonged to a Basil Zonaras with the rank of vestes, who would have been about the right age to be Nicholas Zonaras' brother.[17] Either Basil or Nicholas would have been of an age to have become the father of John Zonaras, around 1074.

Another Nicholas Zonaras is attested as protoasecretis in both 1157 and 1176, and as drungary of the Watch on a twelfth-century seal.[18] This Nicholas cannot of course be the same as the Nicholas who had attended the council of 1088, but was probably that Nicholas's grandson, since the Byzantines habitually named their sons for their grandfathers. The younger Nicholas, who may have been born around 1115, was the right age to be the son of the historian John Zonaras; but since the historian speaks of having lost "those dearest to me" before he began a history that he finished as a monk around 1145, he is unlikely to have had a son

[11] Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.29.29.

[12] Heinemann, *Quaestiones*, pp. 9–11, also puts Zonaras' birthdate around 1075, though I find some of his arguments inconclusive.

[13] See below, pp. 399 and 402 with n. 67.

[14] On the name, see Heinemann, *Quaestiones*, pp. 5–9.

[15] *Theophanes Continuatus* VI, pp. 441–42.

[16] I would therefore identify *PBW*, Nikolaos 205 (judge of the Hippodrome in 1088), with Nikolaos 20308 (judge of Thrace and Macedonia on a seal of the last third of the eleventh century), and probably also with Nikolaos 20159 (owner of a seal of c. 1100, with no office specified).

[17] *PBW*, Basileios 20107.

[18] *PBW*, Nikolaos 198.

who survived until 1176. The younger Nicholas Zonaras is therefore more likely to have been the son of an otherwise unattested son of the elder Nicholas. Obviously from the late eleventh century onward the Zonaras family held high judicial and secretarial posts in the bureaucracy, which commanded high salaries and a certain prominence in society.

We have some further information about the Zonaras family. A twelfth-century commemoration of a church in the Monastery of St. Glyceria, where the historian became a monk, mentions a Zonaras with the monastic name of Naucratius. This text says that the monastery had been abandoned before the arrival of a certain Gregory Taronites, its "first founder," who appears in the same manuscript in a commemoration of his own. According to the commemoration of Gregory, he became a monk soon after 1081, spent more than eight years at a monastery in Constantinople, stayed for unspecified but apparently not very long periods on the nearby islands of Oxia and Iatros, and finally moved to St. Glyceria. There he headed a community of about forty monks and began to build a monastery, but died, perhaps around 1110, before completing its church. The next abbot, Basil, "the second founder," continued work on the monastery church from his own funds and those of "our common brother of blessed memory, the most reverend monk Naucratius Zonaras, former drungary of the Watch." Perhaps around 1120, Basil also died before the church was finished, and was succeeded by a third abbot, Joseph, who "after some years" as abbot of St. Glyceria became abbot of the Pantocrator Monastery in Constantinople, evidently when it was founded, in 1136. The church of the Monastery of St. Glyceria, which must have been a rather expensive and elaborate structure, was finally consecrated in 1142.[19]

Although the historian John Zonaras became a monk in the same monastery, John must have been his name as a monk, while his baptismal name, unless it was also John, is unknown. In any case, the difference in names shows that John Zonaras cannot have been the same monk as Naucratius Zonaras. Because by this time monks often took monastic names that began with the same letter as their baptismal names, Naucratius seems likely to have been the monastic name of Nicholas Zonaras, who must therefore have become drungary of the Watch sometime after 1088, the date when he still held the lower rank of a judge of the Hippodrome. Basil, "the second founder" and the second abbot of St. Glyceria, may in fact be the former vestes Basil Zonaras, who could have kept his baptismal name as his monastic name in honor of St. Basil of Caesarea, author of the most respected Byzantine monastic rules.[20] Like Naucratius Zonaras, Basil had enough

[19] See Mango, "Twelfth-Century Notices," who entertains the possibility that "the first founder" Gregory Taronites was the same Gregory Taronites (*PBW*, Gregorios 106) who rebelled against Alexius I in 1103/4, "although it must be admitted that in that case our hagiographical text has been extremely economical with the truth" (p. 226). I find it much easier to suppose that the abbot was another Gregory Taronites, of whom there seem to have been several (*PBW*, Gregorios 20110, 20131, 20132, and 20142).

[20] On Byzantine monastic names, see Talbot and McGrath, "Monastic Onomastics."

money to contribute significantly to the construction of the monastery church, and perhaps to construction of the other monastic buildings as well.

These considerations allow us to make a plausible if conjectural reconstruction of John Zonaras' life and family history. The elder Nicholas Zonaras may have been born around 1055, served as a provincial judge and then as a judge of the Hippodrome by 1088, then become drungary of the Watch. Either Nicholas or his brother and fellow bureaucrat Basil probably became the father of John Zonaras, around 1074. Not much before 1100, and perhaps some years later, Nicholas probably became a monk under the name of Naucratius in the recently refounded Monastery of St. Glyceria, whose second abbot, Basil, may well have been Naucratius' brother. In any case, Naucratius and Basil used their own wealth to advance the construction of the monastery's church. Meanwhile the future historian John Zonaras, aided by his family connections and literary accomplishments, enjoyed a distinguished career in the bureaucracy, for which he had been suitably educated in Constantinople. A man of serious religious and literary interests, he wrote poems, speeches, and perhaps a lexicon. Commissioned to write a commentary on canon law, probably by Alexius I, John Zonaras became head of the chancery as protoasecretis, perhaps under Alexius, and then head of the judiciary as drungary of the Watch, probably under John II.

While pursuing his career as a high official, the future historian married and evidently had a child or children. (We have seen, however, that the younger Nicholas Zonaras, born around 1115, was probably the son of a brother or cousin of the historian.) Yet John Zonaras, apparently without questioning the right of John II to the throne, became dissatisfied with what he saw of the imperial administration during that emperor's reign. At an uncertain date, perhaps around 1130, Zonaras' wife and child or children died. Deeply affected by his loss, and feeling that he had nothing more to hope for from this world, John became a monk in the Monastery of St. Glyceria, where he surely had a family connection, though by that time he may not have had surviving relatives among the monks. After a period of lethargy in the monastery, when he wrote nothing, John was persuaded by his friends, perhaps around 1135, to write a history. He completed his lengthy compilation around 1145, when he was about seventy. His friends soon circulated his work in Constantinople, where it was already used by Constantine Manasses, around 1150.[21]

John Zonaras had the literary and legal training that fitted him for the highest offices in the bureaucracy. His literary style, though in general clear and not ostentatious, is formal and Atticizing, as we would expect of an educated man who wanted to write elegantly.[22] In accordance with the request of his friends as described in his preface, Zonaras avoids inventing (or copying from his sources) long speeches, descriptions, or digressions.[23] While he employs the optative mood

[21] See below, p. 402 and n. 67.

[22] The best treatment of Zonaras' style is in Grigoriadis, *Linguistic and Literary Studies*, though its insistence on Zonaras' originality (and especially on his sense of humor) is questionable.

[23] Zonaras, *Epitome*, preface 1, pp. 4–7.

in his first sentence and uses the dual number for Adam and Eve and often thereafter, such archaisms had become standard in formal Attic prose.[24] Even though Zonaras implies in his preface that he lacked some of the books he needed and describes his monastery as remote, St. Glyceria was only about forty-five miles across the Sea of Marmara from Constantinople, an easy day's voyage in good weather; in any case, Zonaras was able to draw on a fine collection of books on Roman and Byzantine history, including important texts that are lost to us today.[25] Such works cannot have been part of the library of any ordinary monastery, let alone one that had been recently founded. Therefore Zonaras had presumably brought some of them with him from a personal library that he had assembled before his retirement, then had other books sent to him from Constantinople by his friends, who had urged him to write a history after they had consulted other histories and found them wanting.

Although the editors of our printed editions have divided Zonaras' *Epitome* into eighteen books for purposes of convenience, our Byzantine manuscripts, evidently following Zonaras himself, divide it into just two gigantic books, corresponding to Books I–IX and X–XVIII in our editions.[26] Zonaras seems to have employed his book divisions not as convenient markers for reference but as signs that he was writing a classicizing history, as a means of setting off the history of the early Jews and Romans in his Book I from the history of the later Romans in his Book II, and (as we shall see) as an acknowledgment of a gap in his source material between Books I and II. Especially for a history called an epitome, Zonaras' work is of extraordinary length. Almost half as long again as either Procopius' *Wars* or the chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon—the longest surviving Byzantine histories up to this time—Zonaras' *Epitome* is also longer than the combined chronicles of George Syncellus and Theophanes Confessor. While some ancient authors like Diodorus and Cassius Dio had compiled longer histories than Zonaras', they had written before the Byzantine period, and large parts of their works are lost today. Zonaras must have called his work an epitome not because it was short but because it epitomized its sources. Large parts of these, including much of Dio's history and some other works that are harder to identify, are now known to us only from Zonaras' *Epitome*.

After his preface, with his description of how he came to write the *Epitome* and his summary of its contents, Zonaras begins his Book I with the history of the Jews from the Creation to the Babylonian Captivity, epitomized from the Septuagint and Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*. He continues the story of the Jews down to the Roman victory in the Jewish War, including the history of the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans as each of them affected the Jews. While still making

[24] Zonaras, *Epitome*, preface 1, p. 3 (ἄν τις εἴποι), and I.2, p. 22 (ἀμφοῖν).

[25] Zonaras, *Epitome*, preface 2, p. 8. Büttner-Wobst, "Abhängigkeit," pp. 168–70, whose expectations seem to me unrealistic, believes that all Zonaras' sources were in the library of St. Glyceria and is disappointed by their limited range.

[26] See Zonaras, *Epitome* IX.31, p. 298, and X.1, p. 298, with the apparatus in Pinder's edition.

most use of the Septuagint and Josephus, Zonaras also draws on Epiphanius of Salamis' *On Weights and Measures*, Theodoret of Cyrrhus' *Commentary on Daniel*, Plutarch's *Artaxerxes* and *Alexander*, Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus*, Herodotus, Josephus' *Jewish War*, and possibly the "Paschal Chronicle." Thus far Zonaras appears to have used only sources that survive today. Next he turns to the history of early Rome from Aeneas to the Roman destruction of Carthage and Corinth (146 B.C.). Here his main source was evidently Books I–XXI of Dio's history, now lost to us, supplemented by Herodotus' *Histories* and Plutarch's *Romulus*, *Numa*, *Publicola*, *Camillus*, and *Aemilius Paullus*.[27]

Since Zonaras says that he concluded his Book I with 146 B.C. because he was unable to find proper sources for Roman history after that date, his set of Dio's history must have lacked Books XXII–XLIII.[28] He accordingly begins his Book II by summarizing the next sources that he found for Roman history, Plutarch's *Pompey* and *Caesar*, beginning with Pompey's birth, in 106 B.C. From Julius Caesar's assassination, in 44 B.C., to Dio's second consulship, in A.D. 229, Zonaras follows Dio's history from Book XLIV apparently to its final Book LXXX, supplementing Dio with Plutarch's *Brutus* and *Antony*, Eusebius' *History of the Church*, Luke's Gospel, and Josephus' *Jewish War*. Zonaras also includes some information not in our text of Dio that must derive either from a more complete text of Dio or from another source. After our text of Dio breaks off with Book LX, Zonaras supplies some parts of it that are not preserved in the Constantinian *Excerpts* or Xiphilinus' epitome, although he appears to have made use of Xiphilinus' epitome as well.[29]

Which sources Zonaras used for the third through sixth centuries, after Dio's history ended, remains a matter of doubt and controversy.[30] While he evidently continued to use Eusebius (and in one case Dio) as a supplementary source, up to this point Zonaras had preferred to rely on a single main source, first Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* and then Dio's *Roman History*.[31] Therefore, following the practice with which he had begun, we might have expected him to adopt a single main source for the subsequent period. The most likely candidate to be this main source from 229 to around 500 is the now fragmentary seventh-century *Chronological*

[27] See the *fontes* listed in the apparatus to Pinder's edition of Zonaras, *Epitome* I–IX, especially pp. 205 (a possible reference to the "Paschal Chronicle" and to Epiphanius) and 355 (another reference to Epiphanius). For more detailed treatment, see Büttner-Wobst, "Abhängigkeit," pp. 123–50.

[28] Zonaras, *Epitome* IX.31, pp. 297–98. On the transmission of parts of Dio's history, see above, pp. 310–11 and n. 8.

[29] See the *fontes* listed in the apparatus to Pinder's edition of Zonaras, *Epitome* IX–XII.14, and Büttner-Wobst, "Abhängigkeit," pp. 150–68. Note that Zonaras, *Epitome* X.35–38, XI.2, and XI.6–11, adds information not in our text of Dio's Books LV–LVII and LIX–LX, and that the information from Appian's *Roman History* in *Epitome* XI.16 and XI.21 and from Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* and *Lives of the Sophists* in *Epitome* XI.19–20 may well have reached Zonaras by way of Dio's history.

[30] For a good summary of the controversy, see Banchich and Lane, *History*, pp. 8–11.

[31] Note that Zonaras, *Epitome* XIII.3.13–21, cites Dio twice by name when quoting from his description of Byzantium under Septimius Severus.

History of John of Antioch, which for this period plagiarized the sixth-century *Chronological Epitome* of Eustathius of Epiphania. For the second, third, and fourth centuries Eustathius seems to have relied heavily on the history composed in Latin by Ammianus Marcellinus, including its lost Books I–XIII, covering the years from 96 to 353.[32]

Zonaras' narrative of the poorly attested period from 229 to 353 is surprisingly detailed and accurate, often recording the lengths not just of imperial reigns, as Byzantine histories often do, but also of the emperors' life spans, as Byzantine histories seldom do. An interest in emperors' ages at their death is characteristic both of the preserved part of Ammianus' history and of the part of John Malalas' chronicle based on Ammianus by way of Eustathius.[33] Zonaras reports plausible life spans for fifteen emperors from the period covered by the lost books of Ammianus' history, from Hadrian to Constans I.[34] Zonaras agrees with Ammianus on the life span of Jovian and probably differs with him about the life span of Julian only because Eustathius misunderstood Ammianus' Latin.[35] Zonaras provides us with perhaps our best record of the flight of Prince Hormisdas from Persia, an incident that Ammianus mentions having recorded in one of his lost books.[36] Zonaras also includes passages that seem to come from a lost fourth-century Arian history used by Eustathius.[37] Thus Zonaras appears to preserve unique fragments that modern

[32] See Banchich and Lane, *History*, especially pp. 8–11, and Roberto, *Ioannis Antiocheni Fragmenta*, especially pp. clxvii–clxviii. On John of Antioch, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 311–29, and "Byzantine World Histories."

[33] See Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 318–19.

[34] Zonaras, *Epitome* XI.24, p. 521.16–17 (Hadrian: 62 years, 5 months, 19 days); XII.3, p. 531.14–15 (Marcus: 59 years less 38 days); XII.5, p. 538.12–13 (Commodus: 31 years, 4 months); XII.8, p. 542.13 (Pertinax: 67 years less 4 months); XII.7, p. 545.22–23 (Didius Julianus: 60 years, 4 months, 4 days); XII.12, p. 560.15 (Geta: 22 years, 9 months); XII.12, p. 564.3–4 (Antoninus [Caracalla]: 29 years); XII.17, p. 578.9–10 (Maximinus: 65 years); XII.17, p. 579.4–5 (Maximus [Pupienus] and "Albinus" [Balbinus]: 74 and 60 years, respectively); XII.17, p. 579.19–20 (Gordian I: 79 years); XII.22. p. 592.3–4 (Aemilianus: 40 years); XII.28, p. 608.5–6 (Tacitus: 75 years); XIII.4.27 (Constantine I: 65 years) and XIII.6.12 (Constans: 30 years). Note that Zonaras records a life span for Constantine (65 years, implying a birthdate of 273) different from Malalas XIII.14 (60 years, 3 months, implying a birthdate of 278) and is apparently correct (see Barnes, *New Empire*, pp. 39–43 and 46, arguing for a birthdate of 272 or 273), probably because Malalas miscopied Eustathius but John of Antioch did not.

[35] Cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIII.13.34 (Julian: 31 years) and XIII.14.15 (Jovian: 33 years), with Ammianus XXV.3.23 (Julian: 32 years, *anno aetatis altero et tricensimo*, which Eustathius seems to have misunderstood to mean 31) and XXV.10.12 (Jovian: 33 years). However, either Eustathius or Zonaras must have used a source different from Ammianus for the age of Valentinian I; cf. Zonaras XIII.15.20 (84 years), with Ammianus XXX.6.6 (55 years, presumably correct).

[36] Cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIII.5.17–33, with Ammianus XVI.10.16; cf. *PLRE* I, Hormisdas 2.

[37] Cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIII.11.28, XIII.12.1, and XIII.12.44, with Banchich and Lane, *History*, pp. 227 (nn. 95 and 97) and 232–33 (n. 109). Note that the last passage provides a link with John of Antioch in a parallel with Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus, who used Eustathius. (See above, p. 71 and n. 134.) On the lost Arian history (or histories), see above, p. 69 n. 123.

scholars have mostly overlooked from John of Antioch, Eustathius, Ammianus, and the lost Arian history. In addition, Zonaras took from Psellus' *Concise History* two sayings dubiously attributed to Constantine I, along with Psellus' idea that Theodosius I came from the "city" of Spain.[38]

Zonaras seems to have continued to use John of Antioch as his main source through the fifth century. The question of his chief source, however, is complicated by the fact that Zonaras also used John Malalas, whose history resembles that of John of Antioch, because both of them plagiarized Eustathius.[39] To complicate matters further, Zonaras seems also to have used the ecclesiastical history of Theodore the Lector, which survives today only in fragments. Moreover, the histories of Theodore and John of Antioch seem both to have been used by Theophanes and Pseudo-Symeon, and Zonaras knew Theophanes and either Pseudo-Symeon or George Cedrenus, who plagiarized Pseudo-Symeon.[40] For the reigns of Justin I and Justinian, Zonaras' main source was evidently the final version of Malalas' chronicle, which ended with Justinian's death, in 565.[41] From 565 to 813 Zonaras' main source is Theophanes' *Chronography*, apparently supplemented by either Pseudo-Symeon or Cedrenus, the patriarch Nicephorus' *Concise History*, and two epigrams from Agathias' sixth-century verse anthology, which is now lost in its original form.[42] Since determining the interrelation of these texts

[38] Cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIII.4.34 and XIII.17.9, with Psellus, *Concise History* 55 and 62.

[39] Cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIII.2.5–19 (Eudocia's marriage to Theodosius II) and 27–39 (their estrangement), with Malalas XIV.4–6 and 8, "Paschal Chronicle," pp. 575–79 and 584–85, Symeon I, 97.1–2, and Cedrenus I, pp. 590–91; cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV.1.9–11 (the trial of the quaestor Isocasius), with Malalas XIV.38, "Paschal Chronicle," pp. 595–96, and Theophanes A.M. 5960; cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV.3.28–30 (the defeat of Vitalian's fleet), with Malalas XVI.16, and John of Antioch, fr. 311; and cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV.3.31–37 (rioting in Constantinople over Anastasius' addition to the *Trisagion*), with Malalas XVI.19, and Cedrenus I, pp. 631–32.

[40] In most cases, Zonaras, Theophanes, and Pseudo-Symeon (copied by Cedrenus) all seem to have used Theodore's full text. Cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV.1.14–19 (a fire in Constantinople), with Theodore the Lector, fr. 394, Theophanes A.M. 5954, and Cedrenus I, pp. 609–11; cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV.2.4–6 (the rebellion of Basiliscus), with Theodore the Lector, frs. 401–2, Theophanes A.M. 5967, pp. 120–21, and Cedrenus I, pp. 615–16; cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV.3.23–25 (Theoderic "the African" [an error] and the orthodox deacon), with Theodore the Lector, fr. 463, Theophanes A.M. 5991, p. 142, and Cedrenus I, p. 68; cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV.4.1–7 (the conversion of the Saracen Alamundarus), with Theodore the Lector, fr. 513, Theophanes A.M. 6005, pp. 159–60, and Cedrenus I, pp. 631–32. On Theodore, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 169–74.

[41] See the references to parallel passages in Zonaras (beginning with "3,144,10–15") in the Index Locorum of Thurn's edition of Malalas, p. 551, most of which show dependence of Zonaras on Malalas (though note that our MS of Malalas often epitomizes Malalas' original text).

[42] For the epigrams, cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV.7.5 and XIV.10.6, with *Greek Anthology* IX.641 and IX.657 (attributed to Marianus Scholasticus in the MSS; but see Waltz et al., *Anthologie grecque* VIII, p. 18 n. 1, for a defense of Zonaras' attribution to Agathias); see Alan Cameron, *Greek Anthology*, pp. 71–72, for the case that Zonaras used Agathias' original *Cycle*, not the *Palatine Anthology* (with its attribution of the second epigram to Marianus, which Cameron accepts). For Pseudo-Symeon, cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV.10.8–21 (Justin II's justice),

often depends on minor textual differences, Zonaras' sources are unlikely to be identified satisfactorily until we have better editions of Zonaras, Pseudo-Symeon, and Cedrenus. From 813 to 1081 Zonaras' main source is the second edition of John Scylitzes' history, supplemented until 1025 by the lost histories of Theodore of Side and Theodore of Sebastea, and after 976 by the second edition of Psellus' *Chronography* and one of Psellus' letters.[43]

The only part of the *Epitome* substantially composed by Zonaras himself is on the reign of Alexius I. Apart from a few dates, it contains information that well-informed officials like Zonaras and his friends could easily have remembered.[44] Zonaras' is the sole contemporary account of Alexius' reign that we can compare with Anna Comnena's, though as part of a world history his version is only about a twentieth as long as hers. The two historians actually differ in tone more than they disagree about facts. Without Anna's sympathetic presentation and interpretations, Zonaras presents the sort of catalogue of calamities that Alexius reportedly feared a history of his reign would be.[45] Minimizing Alexius' reconquests from the Turks, Zonaras records the brutal sack of Constantinople by Alexius' troops in 1081, the emperor's desperate confiscations of property, the devastating Norman, Pecheneg, and Cuman invasions, the frequent conspiracies against Alexius, his long and crippling illness, and the bitter conflict over the succession between his son John and the empress Irene, her daughter Anna, and Anna's husband, Nicephorus. The reader receives the accurate impression that the emperor spent most of his time averting one disaster after another. Zonaras admits that Alexius had few private vices, aside from insufficient respect for learned men. (The historian-monk seems not to have considered Alexius' philandering, which he has mentioned earlier, important enough to count as a private vice.)[46] In Zonaras' opinion Alexius' main faults were public, because he favored his relatives and

with Cedrenus I, pp. 680–83 (from John of Antioch?); cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV.12.41–46 (Chosroës II's prophecy), with Cedrenus I, p.696 (from Theophylact Simocatta V.15.3–7); cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV.13.1–4 (the succession of the patriarch Cyriacus), with Cedrenus I, p. 699 (from John of Antioch?); cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV.14.12–14 (the burial of Maurice's family in the Church of St. Mamas), with Cedrenus I, pp. 707–8 (from John of Antioch?); cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV.14.43–51 (the execution of Phocas), with Cedrenus I, pp. 712–13 (from John of Antioch, fr. 321?), and Nicephorus, *Concise History* 1; cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV.15.9–10 (the death of Heraclius' wife, Eudocia), with Nicephorus, *Concise History* 3; and cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV.15.22–33 (Heraclius' interrogation of "Crispus" [Priscus]), with Nicephorus, *Concise History* 2.

43 See the Index Locorum in Thurn's edition of Scylitzes, pp. 576–79, and (for the sources of Zonaras' Books XVII–XVIII) Trapp, *Militärs*, pp. 13–19. For Zonaras' use of the history of Theodore of Side and its continuation by Theodore of Sebastea, see above, pp. 248–49.

44 Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.21.23 (Eustratius was patriarch for 3 years [1081–84]), XVIII.25.7 (Nicholas [III] Grammaticus was patriarch for 27 years [1084–1111]), XVIII.28.13 (Alexius died on August 15 of the 11th indiction [1118]) and XVIII.29.11–12 (Alexius died after a reign of 37 years, 4 months, and "some" [actually 14] days, in A.M. 6626 [1081–1118]. Note that Zonaras can only guess Alexius' age, "some 70 years or something very near that").

45 Comnena XV.11.1.

46 Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.24.14.

failed to uphold Byzantine traditions or to honor senators. Yet Zonaras, echoing Psellus, concedes that no other emperors were perfect either.[47]

The main reason for Zonaras' expressed dissatisfaction with Alexius—and presumably for the dissatisfaction with John II implied by Zonaras' declaring his reign "neither advantageous nor opportune" to record—was that the Comneni accorded their officials too little respect. In describing Constantine I's inauguration of Constantinople in 330, Zonaras mentions the horoscope of a certain Valens that predicted the city would last 696 years. Since the year 1026 had long passed, Zonaras observes that either Valens was wrong "or one must think that he referred to the years in which the customs of the state were observed and the constitution and the senate were honored," so that the empire was not a "tyranny" in which the rulers exploited their subjects for private gain as they did later.[48] Obviously Zonaras resented the fact that under the Comneni learned bureaucrats like himself had lost much of the wealth and influence that they had enjoyed earlier in the eleventh century, as his relatives had presumably told him. (Zonaras seems not to have realized that Basil II, who reigned from 976 to 1025, had shown scant regard for any of his subordinates.) Under the Comneni real wealth and influence were reserved for the highest military officials, and especially for relatives of the emperors. Probably Zonaras' reasons for retiring to a monastery included not just his bereavement but his disappointment that, even after reaching the top of his profession as drungary of the Watch, he enjoyed much less income and respect than generals and imperial relatives.[49]

Despite its great length, Zonaras' *Epitome* survives in a remarkable number of manuscripts and became one of the few Byzantine histories to be translated into Slavonic.[50] Its popularity was largely deserved. Besides being a useful work of reference full of interesting facts that were otherwise hard or impossible to find, its narrative could and can be read with interest by any serious student of history. Its comprehensiveness and range of sources are impressive, and show that by the standards of Byzantine world historians Zonaras did some real research, trying to find the best sources he could for each segment of his work. Even today, his *Epitome* remains an important witness that has yet to be fully exploited for several lost texts that have yet to be conclusively identified. Zonaras' Atticizing style is proficient, and his comments are sensible. Though his organization is simply

[47] Cf. Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.29.26–28, with Psellus, *Chronography* VI.25–28.

[48] Zonaras, *Epitome* XIII.3.5–9. "Valens" is probably a confused reference to the second-century astrologer Vettius Valens (see *RE* VIIIA2 [1958], cols. 1871–73), though the existence of a fourth-century astrologer named Valens is conceivable (*RE* VIIA2 [1948], col. 2139). This horoscope is also mentioned by Cedrenus I, p. 497, and attributed by Pingree, "Horoscope," to a certain Demophilus writing c. 990. If Pseudo-Symeon was Cedrenus' source for the horoscope, Pingree's reconstruction would imply that my date of c. 978 for Pseudo-Symeon is too early; but the reference to the horoscope may not have been in Pseudo-Symeon's original text, or Demophilus (or someone else) may have cast the horoscope at a somewhat earlier date.

[49] Cf. Magdalino, "Aspects," especially pp. 329–33.

[50] See Jacobs, *Zōnaras-Zonara*.

chronological and he generally adopts his sources' point of view, he had a genuine interest in history and love for the past that make his history more than a mere scholarly exercise. Zonaras' *Epitome* ranks in its scope with Photius' *Bibliotheca*, the Constantinian *Excerpta*, and the *Suda* as a monument of middle Byzantine scholarship.

Constantine Manasses

More a poet than an historian, Constantine Manasses was the first Byzantine to write a chronicle in verse.[51] He seems to have been born in Constantinople around 1125.[52] His family, without being rich or famous, were socially well connected. They were apparently related to the Apocaucus family, who had held important military and civil positions since the late tenth century. Constantine Manasses was also presumably a younger relative of Athanasius Manasses, who became the representative at Constantinople of the Monastery of St. John on Patmos, then in 1157 was named Greek patriarch of Antioch by the emperor Manuel I.[53] Constantine Manasses received an excellent literary education. At an early age, in one way or another he came to the attention of the sebastocratorissa Irene, the widow of Manuel I's brother Andronicus and a patron of literature. Manasses wrote a poem about astrology for Irene, and she commissioned him to compose a world history in verse. He must have finished his *Chronological Synopsis* around 1150, since he wrote it after Manuel's accession, in 1143, and after the completion of Zonaras' *Epitome*, around 1145, then delivered the poem to Irene before she died in 1153. The appearance of Zonaras' massive *Epitome* may in fact have inspired Irene to request something shorter and easier to read. She must have liked Manasses' *Synopsis*, because despite complaining of how much work it was to prepare he was pleased with how much she paid him.[54]

Manasses never wrote history again, but he composed a good deal more poetry. The most ambitious of his poems was a verse novel in nine books, *Aristander and Callithea*, now preserved only in fragments, which he seems to have finished

[51] On Manasses, see Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* III, pp. 535–57; Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 126 and 419–22, and II, pp. 126–28 and 161; Lampsidis, *Constantini Manassis Breviarium*, pp. xi–clix; E. Jeffreys, "Attitudes," especially pp. 199–215 and 234–38; Trypanis, *Greek Poetry*, pp. 483–84, 485–86, and 488–89; *PBW*, Konstantinos 302; and Magdalino, "In Search," especially pp. 161–64.

[52] The birthdate of c. 1130 suggested by Horna, "Hodoiporikon," p. 320, is often repeated and should be roughly correct, but the *Chronological Synopsis* looks more like the work of a man of twenty-five than of a man of twenty. Lampsidis, "Zur Biographie," pp. 104–10, dates the *Chronological Synopsis* around 1142/43 and Manasses' birth around 1115, but for reasons that fail to persuade me.

[53] On the Apocauci, see Kazhdan in *ODB* II, p. 134; on Athanasius Manasses, see Failler, "Patriarche."

[54] Manasses, *Chronological Synopsis*, p. 4 (his dedicatory epigram) and vv. 7–17 (his labor and payment) and 2509–11 (his reference to Manuel I). On Irene, see E. Jeffreys, "Sevastokratorissa," and *PBW*, Eirene 20115.

before 1160.[55] After Irene's death, he eventually found another patron in the sebastus John Contostephanus, a cousin of Manuel I.[56] In 1160 the recently widowed emperor sent Contostephanus on an embassy to King Baldwin III of Jerusalem to ask for the hand of one of two relatives of Baldwin's vassals, Melisende of Tripoli or Maria of Antioch. Contostephanus asked the reluctant Manasses to accompany him, perhaps because Constantine's relative Athanasius Manasses was then patriarch of Antioch (1157–70).[57] On the journey the homesick Constantine recorded his experiences in a long poem. He traveled through Anatolia to Jerusalem—which he found appallingly hot in the summer—fell ill in Tyre, went to Cyprus to recuperate, sailed to Tripoli in 1161, fell ill again and recovered, and in 1162 returned by way of Cyprus to Constantinople, to his great relief.[58] He kept up his connection with John Contostephanus at least until 1172, when John's wife, Theodora, died and Manasses wrote a eulogy for her. Manasses delivered orations at Manuel's court at least until 1175, including an encomium of the emperor himself in 1173.

In two manuscripts of his *Synopsis*, Manasses is called "the later metropolitan of Naupactus," in Greece, and in a letter the future metropolitan of Naupactus John Apocaucus mentions being ordained deacon around 1180 "by my uncle," the metropolitan of Naupactus "Manasses." A seal belonging to "Constantine Manasses, bishop of Panium," in Thrace, dates from around the same time, indicating that Constantine held that lower-ranking bishopric before he was promoted to metropolitan of Naupactus.[59] The argument has been made, however, that a late copyist, confusing the poet Constantine Manasses with a bishop of the same name, added the note in the title of the *Synopsis* that the poet had become metropolitan of Naupactus.[60] Yet the name was a rare one, the dates fit nicely, and copyists seldom did research on their authors. The most likely explanation, therefore, is that a contemporary copyist added the note when he heard that the poet had become metropolitan of Naupactus.

We may still doubt that Manuel I would have appointed to two bishoprics a man who had made his name only as a secular author and was very much attached to Constantinople. On the other hand, we know that at almost exactly the same time Manuel appointed first as bishop of Myra and then as metropolitan

[55] See Mazal, *Roman*, with p. 71 on the date (though citing an hypothesis that I cannot find in Horna, "Hodoiporikon") and pp. 163–209 for the fragments.

[56] See Magdalino, "In Search," p. 161, and *PBW*, Ioannes 17013.

[57] Failler, "Patriarche," p. 67, believes that Athanasius remained in Constantinople continuously from his appointment in 1157 until 1166, when he is known to have gone to Antioch after a church council; but this seems improbable, since Manuel would presumably have wanted his appointee to look after his interests at Antioch. While we know that Athanasius was in Constantinople on Christmas 1161 to help celebrate the marriage of Manuel and Maria of Antioch, he may very well have made special trips from Antioch to Constantinople for that important occasion (connected with Antioch) and for the council of 1166.

[58] The poem is edited by Horna, "Hodoiporikon," and discussed by Marcovich, "*Itinerary*."

[59] See Bees, "Manassis."

[60] Lampsidis, "Zur Biographie," pp. 97–104.

of Thessalonica the polymath Eustathius, who had also made his name as a secular author and was much attached to Constantinople.[61] Wisely or not, Manuel evidently considered a bishopric a fitting reward for the sort of literary man of modest means whom earlier emperors had usually awarded a senior post in the bureaucracy or judiciary. Like Eustathius, Manasses may have spent much of his time in the capital after his appointment, since Panium was only about eighty miles away. He may well have died around 1187, when his nephew John Apocaucus took a post at the patriarchate in the capital, since another metropolitan of Naupactus is attested in 1191.[62]

Manasses' *Chronological Synopsis* is far from being a typical history, but we ought not to refuse to call it a history just because it is in verse. The *Synopsis* was not even the first verse chronicle in Greek; Apollodorus of Athens had written such a chronicle in the second century B.C., though by Byzantine times it had long been lost and Manasses is unlikely to have known about it.[63] If Manasses' *Synopsis* is of little value as an historical source, the same can be said of most Byzantine world chronicles taken from sources that have survived independently. While Manasses expanded his sources with a number of descriptive and moralizing passages of his own, these are unlikely to be confused with historical facts and include some of the most attractive parts of the poem. If Manasses is less interested in history than in drawing moral lessons, the same can be said of some other historians, like his contemporary Michael Glycas and the earlier chronicler George the Monk. To judge from our surviving manuscripts, Manasses' *Synopsis* was the most widely read history written in middle Byzantine times, though Zonaras' learned *Epitome* comes a fairly close second. Even if most of Zonaras' readers were more interested in history than most of Manasses' readers were, the latter cannot have been much worse educated, in view of Manasses' relatively sophisticated style.

Manasses' *Synopsis* is the first middle Byzantine history that we have some reason to think was read aloud by its author, possibly to a small audience at the house of the sebastocratorissa Irene. The case is by no means conclusive, but the *Synopsis* has features that lend themselves to oral presentation in a way that most histories would not. Its poetic language is clearer and smoother than typical historical prose, and Manasses tries to choose interesting stories and to retell them in an interesting way. Perhaps most significant is that the *Synopsis*, while lacking numbered books or parts, is clearly divided into two at the fall of the Western Roman empire, in 476. There Manasses interrupts himself to praise Irene and Manuel I before resuming with the verses,[64]

> But now let my account embark once again on its journey,
> And let it complete what remains of the course of its history.

[61] See below, pp. 416–17.
[62] Bees, "Manassis," pp. 128–29.
[63] See E. Schwartz in *RE* I (1894), cols. 2855–86.
[64] Manasses, *Chronological Synopsis*, vv. 2513–14.

Since reading the *Synopsis* aloud would have taken about six hours, obviously too long for one sitting, this looks like a break between two long but not unbearable sittings of roughly two and a half and three and a half hours. Of course the *Synopsis* was also copied and distributed, and surely reached far more readers than it ever had auditors.

The *Synopsis* consists of some 6,620 fifteen-syllable verses. The number differs in different manuscripts, because a later interpolator added some lines supplying dates and later copyists omitted some of Manasses' lines.[65] The style is typical of Byzantine poetry, mixing Homeric and Attic Greek with a few concessions to more popular language. Thus we encounter Homeric forms, the dual number, and the optative mood, accompanied by Byzantine ranks and other Byzantine terms.[66] Appending an epigram dedicated to the sebastocratorissa Irene, Manasses begins with a preface also addressed to her and proceeds to the Creation, Adam and Eve, and Noah's ark. After paying cursory attention to the Egyptians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Persians, Alexander the Great, and the Ptolemies, Manasses returns to the story of the Jews from their sojourn in Egypt to the kingship of David. Then he inserts a long narrative of the Trojan War, adopting the ancient variant that Helen stayed in Egypt and never went to Troy. Quickly covering Aeneas' voyage to Italy, the early kings of Rome, and the Roman Republic, Manasses devotes more space to the empire from Julius Caesar to Caracalla, then to Constantine and the foundation of Constantinople, before he pauses at the deposition of Romulus Augustulus. The second part of the poem is a more leisurely account of Byzantine history from Theodosius II, who receives extensive coverage, to Nicephorus III, with whom Manasses concludes, protesting his inability to do justice to the Comneni.

Although not as a great a poet as his contemporary Theodore Prodromus, Manasses is a very capable versifier. Since he had to rewrite his sources to put them into verse, while several of his possible sources resemble each other closely, we cannot always be sure which sources Manasses used. He must, however, have gone to the trouble of consulting several long histories. Besides the Greek Bible, he seems to have used the histories of George the Monk, George Cedrenus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, John of Antioch, John Zonaras, Theophanes Confessor, and Pseudo-Symeon.[67] Manasses' only source that has failed to survive intact appears to be John of Antioch. The poet gives more attention than most Byzantine chroniclers do to the ancient Near East, the Trojan War, and the second-century Roman empire but considerably less attention to the Jews and Christ and his disciples.

[65] See Lampsidis, *Constantini Manassis Breviarium*, pp. lxv–lxxvi.

[66] Manasses, *Chronological Synopsis*, p. 4, v. 1 (ἡμετέροιο πόνοιο), and vv. 286 (ἀμφοῖν δὲ τούτοιν), 1972 (νόμισμα), 3056 (πραιπόσιτος), 3878 (σκηνοῖτο καὶ διάγοι), and 4622 (παπίαν). Cf. Lampsidis, *Constantini Manassis Breviarium*, I, pp. lxii–lxiii, and II, pp. 69–102 (Index Graecitatis).

[67] See most conveniently Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* III, pp. 538–53, and for greater detail the apparatus to Lampsidis' edition of Manasses, with its Index Locorum in vol. II, pp. 103–72. See also E. Jeffreys, "Attitudes," pp. 207–14.

The Crucifixion receives a bare mention, under the reign of Tiberius.[68] The reason Manasses leaves out the Comneni is reasonably clear: lacking any literary source for their reigns but Zonaras' chronicle, Manasses felt unable either to compose the history on his own or to adapt Zonaras' unflattering account of Alexius I in a properly laudatory way.

While the idea of turning world history into a long poem was by no means an inspired one—and seems to have been a commission given to the poet by his patroness—on the whole Manasses performed his onerous and intractable assignment well. Recent scholarship has naturally concentrated on discussing his poem's literary qualities, arriving at a mostly favorable judgment.[69] Manasses provided his readers with the essential historical orientation that they wanted. Since most of them would already have had a basic knowledge of the Bible, they scarcely needed to have its contents retold. Manasses kept them entertained with good stories and good poetry, without giving them more than they wanted to read or telling them more than they wanted to know. They seem especially to have liked his comments on fate, virtues, vices, and life in general, because anthologies of those sayings that left out the intervening history were made and circulated. Two such anthologies are all that we now have of Manasses' verse novel.[70] Yet Manasses' *Chronological Synopsis* survives in almost a hundred Greek manuscripts and a Slavonic translation, with illuminations.[71] As a history for readers who were not much interested in history, the poem enjoyed great success.

Michael Glycas

Just as Constantine Manasses was more a poet than an historian, Michael Glycas was not primarily an historian but a theologian.[72] An intriguing and somewhat enigmatic figure, Glycas was probably born around 1130 into a family of no great wealth or distinction. The name Glycas simply means "Sweet." A verse couplet in some of the manuscripts of his *Chronicle* describes him as a native of Corcyra, and he tells us that as a young man he traveled a good deal, read widely, and studied with "wise old men."[73] He presumably came to Constantinople early enough to receive some of his education there, though his learning was of a somewhat unconventional sort and included astrology. In any case, it allowed him to obtain

[68] Manasses, *Chronological Synopsis*, vv. 1975–85.

[69] See Reinsch, "Historia," Nilsson and Nyström, "To Compose," and Nilsson, "Discovering Literariness" and "Narrating Images."

[70] See Nilsson and Nyström, "To Compose," pp. 52–59.

[71] For the Greek MSS, see Lampsidis, *Constantini Manassis Breviarium*, pp. lxxvi–cxlix, and for the Slavonic translation, see Bogdan, *Slavische Manasses-Chronik*.

[72] On Glycas, see Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* III, pp. 585–604, Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 422–26, Beck, *Kirche*, pp. 654–55 and *Geschichte*, pp. 108–9 and 206–7, Kresten, "Zum Sturz," and Magdalino, *Empire*, pp. 198–200 and 370–82 and *Orthodoxie*, pp. 122–30.

[73] Krumbacher, *Geschichte* I, p. 381 (Glycas' birth on Corcyra); Glycas, *Verses*, vv. 1–15 (his travels, reading, and education).

a position as an imperial secretary, apparently in the office of the chartulary of the inkwell Theodore Styppiotes, an influential adviser of Manuel I. Glycas also demonstrated his erudition by composing a treatise *On Problems of Holy Scripture*.[74] Thus launched on a promising career, he married and had a son. Then, early in 1159, both Styppiotes and his subordinate Glycas were charged with treason.

Our accounts of the circumstances partly disagree.[75] According to the historian John Cinnamus, who seems at the time to have been accompanying Manuel I on a campaign in Cilicia, Styppiotes claimed to have learned by divination that the forty-year-old emperor was about to die, and that he would be succeeded by an older emperor chosen by the senate who would rule less despotically than Manuel. When this prophecy was discovered, Styppiotes was blinded and had his tongue cut out.[76] The Latin chronicler Rahewin adds that the chartulary of the inkwell (obviously meaning Styppiotes) had hired three young men to assassinate Manuel in Cilicia; Rahewin adds (mistakenly) that the chartulary died from being mutilated.[77] The Armenian chronicler Gregory the Priest merely reports that while Manuel was in Cilicia a letter arrived reporting a conspiracy against him in Constantinople along with unspecified mischief caused by the Devil.[78] Nicetas Choniates claims that while Manuel was in Cilicia Styppiotes was blinded because the postal logothete John Camaterus, who envied the chartulary's influence with the emperor, forged a treasonous letter from Styppiotes to the Norman king of Sicily (then William I). Choniates, however, wrote much later, shows signs of confusion, and by the time he wrote was hostile to the Camaterus family.[79] Although Styppiotes may conceivably have been innocent, he does appear to have been charged with divination and conspiracy—charges not mentioned by Choniates.

Around the same time Michael Glycas addressed a poem of 581 sixteen-syllable verses to the emperor from prison in Constantinople. In it he professed himself wrongly accused of capital crimes because his learning had aroused suspicion and begged for mercy from Manuel, who was well known as a patron of scholars and poets.[80] According to a note in our manuscript of Glycas' poem, written by someone who believed Glycas was innocent, the emperor sent an order from Cilicia that Glycas should be blinded, though this was done in such a way that he kept

[74] Its title calls Glycas a secretary (γραμματικοῦ, Krumbacher, "Michael Glycas," p. 397), a position that he lost in 1159.

[75] For a thorough and generally convincing discussion, see Kresten, "Zum Sturz."

[76] Cinnamus IV.19. Cinnamus does not identify any older man as Styppiotes' candidate for the throne, but Styppiotes, whose age we do not know, may have meant himself.

[77] Rahewin, *Chronicle* III.58–59 (54).

[78] Gregory the Priest, *Continuation* §40.

[79] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 110–13, dates the fall of Styppiotes during Manuel's Cilician campaign (in 1158–59) and shortly after the betrothal of Manuel's daughter, Maria, to Béla-Alexius of Hungary (in 1165), and has Camaterus stage an incriminating conversation with Styppiotes (then apparently in Constantinople) while Manuel (then apparently in Cilicia) listens to them from behind a curtain. For Choniates' hostility to the Camaterus family, see below, p. 434 and n. 71.

[80] Glycas, *Verses*, vv. 204–16 (his learning as the source of his misfortune) and 541–81 (his innocence).

or regained enough of his sight to be able to read, write, and study the Scriptures. The coincidence in time makes the conclusion practically inescapable that Glycas had been implicated in the alleged plot of Styppiotes. Later, the manuscript note tells us, Glycas, who was still in prison, addressed another appeal to the emperor asking to be released, and lamenting that some of his property had been stolen during his confinement.[81] This appeal has evidently been lost. Glycas seems to have been released by 1165, when he dedicated to Manuel an anthology of popular proverbs with his thanks, which we need not assume were sincere, for his relatively light punishment, since treason was a capital crime.[82]

Several scholars have identified Michael Glycas with a certain Michael Sicidites. Nicetas Choniates says in his history that Michael Sicidites was deservedly blinded and tonsured by Manuel for conjuring up demons and later wrote a treatise on the Eucharist for which he was charged with heresy, in 1200. Choniates adds in a theological treatise of his that Sicidites had been an imperial secretary.[83] The identification of Michael Glycas with Michael Sicidites is plausible but not certain. While the same man could easily have two surnames—taking one from his father and the other from his mother, for example—Michael was an extremely common name. For two imperial secretaries named Michael to have been at least partly blinded on charges of magical practices by Manuel I and to have written theological works would be a remarkable coincidence but not an incredible one. Many educated Byzantines had theological interests, and if two imperial secretaries named Michael were both implicated in Theodore Styppiotes' alleged divination they could well have received the same punishment. Tending to weaken the identification are the facts that Choniates declares Styppiotes innocent and Sicidites guilty, makes no connection between the two men, and obviously relied on rumors from a time when Choniates was a mere child. Admittedly, however, an informant sympathetic to Styppiotes and hostile to Sicidites would have had a reason to suppress a connection between the two men.

At any rate, Glycas was eventually released. After his career in the bureaucracy had been ruined, he may well have become a monk, voluntarily or otherwise. Whether or not he wrote a lost treatise on the Eucharist, he composed a *Chronicle*

81 Kresten, "Zum Sturz," pp. 66–76, largely relying on Krumbacher, "Michael Glycas," pp. 404–20 (including the MS note on pp. 415–16); see also Tsolakis, *Μιχαὴλ Γλυκᾶ στίχοι*, pp. α′–θ′. Bourbouhakis, "'Political' Personae," speculates that Glycas' imprisonment may be fictional but adduces no argument but postmodernist fashion; cf. pp. 113 n. 116 and 170 n. 59, above, for similarly baseless speculation that Byzantine bride shows and Basil I's patroness, Danelis, were fictional.

82 For Glycas' dedicatory poem, see Krumbacher, "Michael Glycas," pp. 447–51, with the dedication to Manuel "when he returned in triumph from Hungary" on p. 447 and thanks for the lightness of Glycas' punishment on pp. 449–50. Here Glycas appears to be referring to Manuel's Hungarian triumph of 1165; cf. Cinnamus V.17 (p. 249).

83 See Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 147–50 and 514–18, and for Nicetas' theological treatise (the *Panoply of Doctrine*, still not fully published) see Dieten's apparatus to Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 148.4 and 514.38, and cf. Kresten, "Zum Sturz," pp. 90–92, Magdalino, *Empire*, pp. 379–80, and Angold, *Church*, pp. 127–31.

addressed to his son, which discusses matters Glycas had already treated in his *On Problems of Holy Scripture*.[84] On the reasonable assumption that Glycas' son was born before his father's imprisonment and was a student in his teens when Glycas endeavored to instruct him by writing the *Chronicle*, it can be dated around 1170. Glycas also composed a refutation of a defense of astrology written by the emperor Manuel.[85] While Glycas presumably intended this refutation to demonstrate that in 1159 the emperor had unjustly punished him for magic, a man so harshly penalized for supposed disloyalty would scarcely have dared to distribute such a tract before Manuel died, in 1180. If Michael Glycas was the same as Michael Sicidites, he seems still to have been alive in 1200, when he would have been around seventy. Since Glycas was a skillful writer with theological interests and strong opinions, we can readily imagine his propounding a doctrine on the Eucharist that attracted both partisans and opponents and was eventually condemned.

Glycas' *Chronicle* begins with a very short preface stressing the brevity of his compilation (which is actually rather long) and dedicating it to his son, whom he addresses constantly throughout the text without naming him. Glycas often cites his sources, including Procopius, George Syncellus, Theophanes, Psellus, Scylitzes, and Zonaras, though Glycas knew some of these only indirectly, apparently including Procopius and Theophanes.[86] The chronicle is divided into four parts. Part I, the longest, covers only the creation of the world in what is essentially an exegetical treatise, drawing on sermons and theological works by Josephus, Basil of Caesarea, John Chrysostom, Psellus, an anonymous bestiary known as the *Physiologus*, and other writings.[87] Part II summarizes the period of the Septuagint from Adam to the Maccabees, using among other writers the Church Fathers, Josephus, Eusebius, George Syncellus, and John Zonaras and giving less attention to contemporary Persian and Greek history. Part III, the shortest, covers New Testament and Roman history from Julius Caesar to Constantine, relying on the Gospels, the Fathers of the Church, Eusebius, George Cedrenus, Zonaras, Constantine Manasses, and others. Part IV treats Byzantine history from Constantine I through Alexius I, following George the Monk, Scylitzes, Cedrenus, Zonaras, Manasses, and other authors. Glycas prudently adds nothing of his own after summarizing Zonaras' account of Alexius' reign, the most recent period covered by his sources.

[84] For parallels between the *Chronicle* and *On Problems*, see Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* III, pp. 600–603.

[85] See George, "Manuel I," W. Adler, "Did the Biblical Patriarchs?" and Magdalino, *Orthodoxie*, pp. 122–26.

[86] Glycas, *Chronicle*, pp. 221 and 223 (Syncellus), 266 (Syncellus, Zonaras), 294 and 369 (Syncellus), 457 (Scylitzes, Syncellus, Theophanes [a reference actually taken from Scylitzes' preface]), 501 (Procopius [a reference actually taken from Zonaras, *Epitome* XIV.9.9–20]), 530 (Zonaras), 531 and 545 (Scylitzes), 546 (Zonaras), 547 and 551 (Scylitzes), 551–52 (Zonaras), and 611–12 and 615 (Psellus). On Glycas' sources, see most recently Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* III, pp. 587–99.

[87] On Glycas' use of the *Physiologus*, see Sbordone, "Φυσιολογία."

Glycas' purpose in writing his *Chronicle* is professedly didactic, though he finds room for enough miracles, prophecies, disasters, and curiosities to keep his readers interested as well as instructed. His impressively wide range of sources shows that he was as well read as he claims to be in his poem from prison. His style is unusually readable. His poem from prison includes passages in relatively popular Greek, perhaps because Theodore Prodromus had recently addressed poems to Manuel in a similar style with success. The language of Glycas' *Chronicle* falls somewhere between Attic Greek and the standard literary Greek of the Septuagint, New Testament, and Church Fathers, avoiding most of the Atticisms and archaisms for the names of people and places customary in formal Byzantine histories.[88] Glycas probably did write the *Chronicle* with the intention of instructing his son, whom he may seldom have been able to see if he was confined to a monastery after his imprisonment. Yet Glycas must also have meant for his work to reach a wider readership, and the *Chronicle* may even have come to be used as a history textbook in schools. It evidently became one of the most widely read Byzantine histories. While supplying the essential historical facts that educated Byzantines wanted to know, it was only about a third as long as Zonaras' *Epitome*, easier to read, and more morally edifying.

John Cinnamus

Rather than a world chronicler like Zonaras, Manasses, and Glycas, John Cinnamus was an historian of contemporary events, like Nicephorus Bryennius and Anna Comnena.[89] Cinnamus, described in the title of his history as an imperial secretary, tells us that he was born after John II's death, in April 1143. Yet he also tells us that he accompanied Manuel I on campaigns in both Europe and Asia "even when I was not yet an adolescent" and implies that he saw the emperor acting as a physician on a campaign that left for Cilicia in 1158.[90] Evidently Cinnamus was born in 1143 or 1144, making him fifteen at most when he went to Cilicia with Manuel. Cinnamus probably grew up in Constantinople, received the standard secondary education of a future bureaucrat, and attended the emperor on the campaign of 1158–59 as a promising young secretary from a well-known civil-service family. The Cinnami, whose name simply means "Cinnamon," are attested by eight lead seals between the early eleventh century and the late twelfth. Two Cinnami held the high ranks of vestes and proedrus. Of the three seals of a John Cinnamus, the two dated to the late eleventh century may belong

88 Cf. Eideneier, "Zur Sprache," and Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, p. 426. Yet Glycas does include some archaisms, apparently repeated from his sources; see *Chronicle*, pp. 508 ("Scythians"), 546 ("Byzantis" for Constantinople), 594 ("Triballians"), etc.

89 On Cinnamus, see Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* III, pp. 625–41, Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 409–16, Neumann, *Griechische Geschichtsschreiber*, pp. 78–102, Brand, *Deeds*, pp. 1–11 (with his appendices and notes on pp. 225–59), Rosenblum, *Jean*, pp. 1–15, *PBW*, Ioannes 17001, Ljubarskij, "John," and Magdalino, *Empire*, especially pp. 18–21 and 477–78.

90 Cf. Cinnamus I.1 (pp. 4–5) and IV.21b (p. 190).

to the historian's grandfather, and the one dated to the late twelfth century probably belongs to the historian himself.[91]

The future historian presumably continued his education on his return from Cilicia, since he claims he had frequent discussions with Manuel about the works of Aristotle, which were not part of the normal secondary curriculum.[92] Apparently still in his youth, Cinnamus composed a very brief rhetorical exercise on the question of how a painter could depict the myth of Apollo and Daphne, especially Daphne's transformation into a tree.[93] Cinnamus seems to have served Manuel as a secretary through the rest of the emperor's reign, both on campaigns and in the palace.[94] He specifically mentions having watched Manuel fighting the Turks and Hungarians, in particular during the siege of Semlin, in 1165.[95] As a secretary, Cinnamus would of course not have been a combatant, but he does seem to have attended the emperor constantly and as closely as possible. The historian gives the impression that he was on hand whenever Manuel wanted to dictate an order in the midst of a battle or a letter in his tent late at night.

Cinnamus mentions in his preface that he wrote after Manuel's death, in September 1180, and later describes Manuel's son, Alexius II, who was murdered around September 1183, as having good prospects for the future.[96] Moreover, Cinnamus writes so unfavorably about the future emperor Andronicus I Comnenus, who seized power in April 1182, that the history must have been finished before Andronicus' rise could be foreseen.[97] Yet Cinnamus is unlikely to have been able to do all his research and writing in less than a year and a half after Manuel's death. In fact, his praise of Manuel is so pervasive and hyperbolic, especially in stories of the emperor's superhuman feats in battle, that most of the history was presumably written and meant to be distributed during Manuel's lifetime. Probably after his embarrassing defeat by the Turks at Myriocephalum, in 1176, Manuel commissioned Cinnamus' history as part of an effort to restore

[91] For the seals of men named Cinnamus, see *PBW*, Basileios 20328 (late eleventh century), Ioannes 20549 (second half of the twelfth century, perhaps the same as the historian, Ioannes 17001), Ioannes 20694 (second half of the eleventh century, perhaps the historian's grandfather), Ioannes 20695 (late eleventh century, perhaps the same as the foregoing), Konstantinos 20491 (proedrus, late eleventh century), Niketas 20274 (vestes, second half of the eleventh century), Petros 20117 (episceptetes of the imperial estates of Mesanacta [in central Anatolia; see Belke and Mersich, *Phrygien*, pp. 338–39], first half of the eleventh century), and Symeon 20138 (end of the eleventh century).

[92] Cinnamus VI.13 (pp. 290–91).

[93] Edited by Bánhegyi, *Kinnamos*, with a Hungarian translation and commentary and (mercifully) a Latin summary.

[94] Brand, *Deeds*, pp. 242 n. 61, 249 n. 26, and 252 n. 9, cannot be right that Cinnamus II.17 (p. 83), IV.14 (pp. 171–72), and V.3 (p. 207) mistakenly locate the Blachernae Palace in the southern part of Constantinople, an error no imperial secretary could have made; here Cinnamus certainly means the Great Palace. (See Magdalino, "Manuel," especially p. 102 n. 4.)

[95] Cinnamus IV.22 (pp. 192–93) and V.14 (pp. 241–42).

[96] Cinnamus I.1 (p. 4) and VI.2 (p. 257).

[97] Cinnamus III.18 (p. 130) and VI.1 (pp. 250–51).

his tarnished reputation for military heroism.[98] Our present text, though it breaks off before Myriocephalum, includes a promise by Cinnamus to show how Manuel averted impending catastrophe there by "exceeding the limits of mortal valor in battle."[99]

Despite his adulation of Manuel, Cinnamus remained an imperial secretary after Andronicus took power and murdered Manuel's son. According to Nicetas Choniates, in 1184 Cinnamus and Bishop Euthymius of New Patras were debating the meaning of Christ's words "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28) at Lopadium, in Bithynia, when Andronicus declared he would throw them both into the nearby Rhyndacus River unless they stopped.[100] Though apparently they did stop, Cinnamus had already expressed strong feelings about this controversy in his history, where he mentions Manuel I's fury at Euthymius' opinion about it.[101] After Andronicus' fall, in September 1185, Cinnamus also served the new emperor, Isaac II Angelus (1185–95), to whom he seems to have addressed an oration.[102] Since Cinnamus would then have been only in his early forties, he could have lived on for quite some time. At the beginning of the reign of the next emperor, Alexius III Angelus (1195–1203), a document from the Monastery of St. John on Patmos tells us of a Manuel Cinnamus who was then a secretary in the maritime bureau at Constantinople.[103] In view of John Cinnamus' effusively stated admiration for Manuel I, we may reasonably conclude that this Manuel was John's son, named for the emperor before 1180 and following the family profession in the central bureaucracy.

John Cinnamus' history has come down to us in only a single manuscript, which begins with John II's accession, in 1118, and breaks off in 1176 in the middle of a sentence, at the end of a page. Evidently later pages have been lost. Since Cinnamus wrote soon after Manuel's death, in 1180, he had every reason to conclude with the end of the reign. Thus the missing part of our manuscript

[98] Brand, *Deeds*, pp. 4–5, however, believes that after 1180 Cinnamus "had been compelled to withdraw from public service" under the regency of Maria of Antioch because of his anti-Latin views, and then wrote his history as a "eulogy of the dynasty" in an attempt "to regain imperial favor and a place in the government." Yet I doubt that Maria would have dismissed Cinnamus for his anti-Latin opinions, just as Andronicus I did not dismiss him for his praise for Manuel; and if she had dismissed Cinnamus for such a reason, he would surely have made his history less anti-Latin than it is if he wanted to win her favor. As for Brand's observation that Cinnamus failed to make much use of the imperial archives, even historians who surely had access to them seldom used them; see below, pp. 437–38.

[99] Cinnamus V.3 (p. 207).

[100] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 331; see Brand, *Byzantium*, pp. 52–53, for the date.

[101] Cinnamus VI.2 (pp. 251–57); on the controversy about John 14:28, see Hussey, *Orthodox Church*, pp. 152–53, and Beck, *Kirche*, pp. 623–24 (with p. 182 on Euthymius Malaces, bishop of New Patras).

[102] Krumbacher, *Geschichte* I, p. 281, speaks only of "eine Rede des Kinnamos an einen Kaiser Angelos," who could also possibly have been Alexius III, though he preferred to use the name Comnenus. (See Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 459.)

[103] See *PBW*, Manuel 108, referring to October 1195.

seems to have covered around a fifteenth of the period originally recorded by Cinnamus' history. The manuscript gives the work the title *Epitome of the Exploits of the Emperor and Porphyrogenitus Lord John Comnenus of Blessed Memory, and Report of the Deeds of His Son the Emperor and Porphyrogenitus Lord Manuel Comnenus of Glorious Memory, Composed by the Imperial Secretary John Cinnamus. Book I of the Histories*. After the account of John II's reign, with seeming inconsistency the manuscript introduces the title *Book II of the Roman History*. Then the manuscript includes no more book numbers or titles, though the editors have interpreted red ornamental strips in its text as the beginnings of Books III, IV, and VII, and lines left blank in the text as the beginnings of Books V and VI.[104] This numbering, however, seems dubious, since Cinnamus may well have used one book number for each of the two imperial reigns in his history, giving it just two books, like those of Zonaras.

Was *Epitome* Cinnamus' own title, meaning merely that his treatment of John's reign is brief? It certainly is that, comprising only about a twelfth of our text, though John reigned for more than two-fifths of the period covered by Cinnamus' narrative. Both Scylitzes and Zonaras had called their works epitomes, but they chiefly summarized the histories of others, whereas Cinnamus wrote an original history and would hardly have wanted to imply that he had not. He does use the word *epitomē* in his preface, but in a metaphorical sense, remarking that he will write of John's reign "briefly and as if in summary" because he was not an eyewitness of that time.[105] Yet the title could also mean that our text is an epitome of the original history, or at least of its treatment of John II—that is, what we have is a scribe's abbreviated version of what Cinnamus originally wrote. The narrative is often rather disjointed, but we might blame that on Cinnamus' defects as a writer. More telling is that six times Cinnamus says he has mentioned something before that he has not mentioned in his text as we have it.[106] Even if one can imagine an author's misremembering once or twice what he had written before, his doing so a half-dozen times in a relatively short work is hard to believe.

The suggestion has been made that our text is a rough draft left unrevised by Cinnamus rather than an epitome. The argument is that an epitomator would presumably have excised Cinnamus' invented speeches and letters, and that Nicetas Choniates' remark that his predecessors' histories ended with the death of Alexius

[104] See Neumann, *Griechische Geschichtsschreiber*, pp. 79–80 and 83–84, and cf. Wirth. "Zur Frage."

[105] Cinnamus I.1 (p. 5: κατ᾽ ἐπιτομὴν καὶ ὥσπερ ἐν κεφαλαίῳ).

[106] Cinnamus I.9 (p. 21: Manuel is said to have been mentioned "often" before, but appears in our text only once before, at I.7 [p. 16]), II.9 (p. 61: Andronicus Comnenus is said to have been the subject of "a long account" before, but no such account is in our text), II.11 (p. 66: Sulayman is said to have been mentioned before as a participant in the battle of Calograea but is not mentioned in our text at II.5 [p. 40] or elsewhere), III.3 (p. 95: Sotas is said to have been mentioned before but is not in our text), V.12 (p. 236: Henry of Austria is said to have been mentioned "often" before but appears here for the first time), and VII.1 (p. 291: Kilij Arslan's receiving subsidies from Manuel is said to have been mentioned before but has not been mentioned before in our text).

I could mean that Cinnamus' history was never distributed.[107] On the other hand, an epitomator might have liked Cinnamus' speeches and letters, or abridged them from versions that were originally even longer. As for Choniates, he does seem to have used Cinnamus' history, but he also seems to have wanted to disown it as an influence, probably because he thought its encomiastic treatment of Manuel was wrong on the merits and not impartial enough to qualify as history. In any case, Choniates would hardly have ignored or disdained Cinnamus' history merely because it showed a few signs of being unfinished.[108] Why Cinnamus, who lived at least several more years after stopping work on his history, would have failed to complete it, when he could after all have revised or continued it to suit new political developments, appears inexplicable.

Much more likely is that a scribe condensed Cinnamus' history, partly rewriting its main title and removing many details but not all the cross-references to them.[109] Probably the epitomator also shortened the invented speeches and letters, none of which is now very long. After summarizing the already brief account of John II's reign in Book I, the scribe probably began to abridge less drastically, because he found the narrative more interesting and informative after Cinnamus began to write as an eyewitness. On the whole, the epitome seems not to have been badly done, and the result usually reads reasonably well.[110] Since the epitomator seems to have altered the main title but not the title of Book II, Cinnamus' original title for the whole work was probably *Roman History*, or perhaps something like *Roman History, Recording the Exploits of the Emperor and Porphyrogenitus Lord John Comnenus of Blessed Memory and the Deeds of His Son the Emperor and Porphyrogenitus Lord Manuel Comnenus of Glorious Memory*.[111] In all, we probably have more than half of Cinnamus' original text, and much more than half of the original history's historical information. Yet any epitomator would have altered some literary features of the original. We should therefore be cautious about criticizing Cinnamus for abrupt changes of subject or commending him for the swift progress of the narrative, although both features are characteristic of his text as we have it.

Cinnamus begins his work with a short preface that refers obliquely to Herodotus' *Histories* and Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus* and mentions his own personal acquaintance with Manuel. The historian observes that he need not write about John II's father and Manuel I's grandfather—that is, Alexius I—because his origins and reign have been "satisfactorily described by those who have recorded

107 Brand, *Deeds*, pp. 9–11.

108 See below, pp. 437–38.

109 Such is the theory of Neumann, *Griechische Geschichtsschreiber*, pp. 79–82, accepted by Krumbacher, *Geschichte* I, pp. 279–80.

110 The passage at Cinnamus V.14 (p. 241.6), where Manuel's leg heals without explanation and Brand, *Deeds*, pp. 254–55 n. 46, postulates a lacuna, appears to be one of the epitomator's relatively rare slips (like the six undeleted references to deleted passages). Admittedly, the Bonn edition of the text is inadequate; cf. Wirth, "Zur asiatischen Toponymie."

111 Cf. the title of Psellus' *Chronography*: Χρονογραφία … ἱστοροῦσα τὰς πράξεις τῶν βασιλέων. …

his deeds … without antipathy toward him."[112] By "those," in the plural, Cinnamus presumably means Nicephorus Bryennius and Anna Comnena, quite possibly excluding Zonaras and Glycas because their treatment of Alexius was too brief and unsympathetic to be satisfactory. Even if Cinnamus' own account of John II has been abridged, the full text seems unlikely to have been very thorough or even particularly favorable to John. The emperor's victories over the Turks and Hungarians are minimized; his failure to take the town of Neocaesarea is emphasized; and disproportionate treatment is given to the young Manuel.[113] Almost a quarter of Book I is devoted to describing how John unexpectedly settled the succession on his youngest son.

With Book II and Manuel's accession, Cinnamus arrives at his real subject. The narrative shifts back and forth from the East to the West, but the focus is almost always on Manuel, and especially on his campaigns against the Turks, Normans, Armenians, Hungarians, Cumans, and Serbs. The major exceptions are the accounts of the Second Crusade, of 1147, and of the Byzantine expedition against Norman Italy, in 1155–58; but even in these Manuel remains a powerful influence in the background, and both campaigns seem to fail only because the Crusaders and the Byzantine generals in Italy disregard Manuel's advice. Cinnamus' battle scenes are dramatic and vivid, repeatedly featuring the emperor's fighting in person against the enemy. Taken as a whole, however, Cinnamus' account of Manuel's exploits is simply not credible. No one, no matter how strong, fortunate, or adept at hand-to-hand combat, could have repeatedly exposed himself to such dangers with uniform success and such minor injuries, and Manuel cannot have been so foolhardy. No doubt Cinnamus' lost account of the battle of Myriocephalum would have included an even more elaborate description of the emperor's fighting skill. The history may originally have ended with a long and eloquent deathbed oration by Manuel on the pattern of the one Cinnamus puts into the mouth of John II.

Apart from his own experiences and whatever he learned from conversation with the emperor, Cinnamus must have had other informants at court. One of them may have been the long-serving imperial secretary Thomas, who was ambushed by the Turks and lost a band of Muslim prisoners entrusted to him by John II, in Syria in 1138. Serving as an imperial secretary twenty years later, Cinnamus should at least have met some of Thomas' former colleagues, and the space he gives this episode in his short account of John's campaigns is not justified by its importance.[114] Another possible informant was Bempitziotes of Adrianople, a soldier whom Manuel ordered to give a misleading signal to the army on an expedition against the Turks of Iconium, in 1146. Even if this anecdote may have

[112] Cinnamus I.1 (pp. 4–5: μὴ πρὸς ἀπέχθειαν ἐκείνῳ).

[113] For Cinnamus' treatment of John's victory over the Hungarians, see Stephenson, "John."

[114] Cinnamus I.8 (pp. 19–20); note that Cinnamus says he has no "reliable" (πιστὸν) source for the latter part of this expedition, when Thomas may no longer have accompanied it. We know nothing else about Thomas (*PBW*, Thomas 17001).

been worth reporting as an example of the emperor's ingenuity, Cinnamus would have been unlikely to know this ordinary soldier's name and origin without knowing the man himself, or a comrade of his.[115] The incident occurred some twelve years before Cinnamus' own service in the bureaucracy began.

Cinnamus probably consulted official dispatches from the Byzantine expedition to Norman Italy of 1155–58, which he describes in detail but presumably did not accompany because the emperor did not. As a court historian and imperial secretary, Cinnamus should have had access to other military dispatches and documents. Nevertheless, except for a chrysobull of 1158 that he probably saw because its date is the only one in his history, he seems to have used little or no archival material.[116] The many speeches and letters in his narrative seem to be his own inventions in the well-established Thucydidean tradition.[117] His making John II's reign a year too long can be explained as a simple slip in arithmetic.[118] Since his relative chronology is generally accurate, he appears to have avoided including dates not because he was unable to find them but because he thought they were unsuitable for a classicizing history. Yet his knowledge of geography much beyond imperial territory is not reassuring, since he thinks that France, or at any rate Poitou, adjoined the Adriatic Sea.[119]

Although we might have expected an imperial secretary who often accompanied the emperor on campaigns to be well informed about troop numbers, Cinnamus supplies only scattered and usually incomplete figures. (He does give total numbers of ships for two Byzantine naval expeditions in which he evidently took no part.)[120] He informs us that the forces of the Second Crusade outnumbered those that Xerxes had led during the Persian War and were reckoned at nine hundred thousand before their commanders lost count.[121] Manuel reportedly told the German emperor Conrad that the Crusaders' army was barely superior to the Byzantines' in numbers and inferior to it in skill.[122] Yet the few figures Cinnamus reports for Byzantine forces range from sixty to six hundred, except for one army numbering something over six thousand.[123] Though these were presumably detachments, Cinnamus likes to emphasize how the Byzantines, and especially

115 Cinnamus II.6 (p. 45). At the time of writing, Bempitziotes was not in the *PBW*.

116 Cinnamus VI.8 (p. 276), dated to the fifteenth year of Manuel.

117 See Kresten, "Auslandsschreiben," pp. 37–44.

118 Cinnamus I.10 (p. 9), where twenty-five years and seven months should be twenty-four years and seven months.

119 Cinnamus I.7 (p. 16).

120 Cinnamus III.2 (p. 92: Manuel prepares 500 triremes and 1,000 transports for the Italian expedition in 1148) and VII.3 (p. 300: Manuel sends 150 ships against Egypt in 1176).

121 Cinnamus II.12 (p. 69).

122 Cinnamus II.16 (p. 79).

123 Cinnamus III.3 (p. 94: Manuel campaigns against the Cumans with 500 men), III.18 (p. 129: Manuel sends 300 men against Andronicus Comnenus), IV.4 (pp. 142–43: the Byzantines in Italy campaign against the Normans with 600 cavalry), IV.17 (pp. 179–80: Manuel campaigns against the Armenians with 500 men), IV.23 (p. 197: Manuel campaigns against the Turks with 60 men), and VII.1 (p. 292: Manuel sends an army of over 6,000 men against the Turks).

Manuel, faced much larger armies and defeated them. In Italy he has six hundred Byzantine cavalry defeat eighteen hundred Norman cavalry and countless infantry, while Manuel is said to have repeatedly put "thousands" and "myriads" of "barbarians" to flight. Cinnamus insists that when he first heard court orators make such claims about the emperor he thought that they were flattery, but later he personally saw in battle that they were true.[124] We, however, should believe what Cinnamus says about Manuel's exploits only if we are ready to believe that almost a million men went on the Second Crusade.

Cinnamus has usually been considered hostile to Westerners.[125] He may more accurately be called hostile to foreigners, since he has no better opinion of Armenians, Serbs, or Turks than of Normans, Germans, Venetians, or Hungarians. His anti-Western remarks are admittedly somewhat more pointed. Though his history includes few comments on anything but Manuel's virtues, he flatly asserts that the leaders of the Second Crusade planned to conquer Byzantium and later interrupts his narrative to denounce the popes and German emperors at length.[126] Such a tone may seem excessive in a history written for Manuel, who negotiated with popes and German emperors, followed Western fashions, had a Hungarian mother, married a German and then a Frenchwoman, and made a series of alliances with Germans, French, Venetians, Hungarians, and the Crusaders of Jerusalem. Yet toward the end of his reign, when Cinnamus would have begun writing, Manuel had quarreled at one time or another with all his Western allies. Cinnamus' history appears to show Manuel's disillusionment with Westerners by the late 1170's, which left the empire ominously short of friends in either East or West.[127]

Cinnamus was not an analytic or even a very thoughtful historian. Of course he had to praise Manuel's actions and policies, perhaps out of genuine feeling, probably because of an imperial commission, and surely to serve his own ambitions. Yet Attaliates managed to eulogize the much worse emperor Nicephorus III and still make perceptive comments on his time, and Anna Comnena managed to admire Alexius I and still give the impression of enough objectivity that her praise for his achievements carries conviction. Cinnamus depicts Manuel as a mighty, fearless, and reckless warrior, a wise ruler, and even an accomplished man of letters, but not really as the shrewd schemer and negotiator that he was above all. His foreign and domestic policies can only be guessed at from Cinnamus' history. Cinnamus sees the empire's enemies and even its allies as evil, perfidious, and often stupid, without conveying any clear idea of what their motives or objectives may have been, no matter how reprehensible. For Cinnamus, history was chiefly a long series of military campaigns whose outcomes were determined by valor and

[124] Cinnamus IV.4 and IV.6 (pp. 142–44: the Byzantines in Italy) and IV.22 (p. 192: Manuel defeats myriads, as his orators said and Cinnamus saw).

[125] See, e.g., Asdracha, "Image," and Lilie, *Byzantium*, pp. 278–80.

[126] Cinnamus II.12 (p. 67: the Second Crusade) and V.7 (pp. 218–20: the pope and the German emperor).

[127] See Treadgold, *History*, pp. 638–50 and 675–77.

fortune. He has little sense of tactics and none of strategy or foreign policy. All the short-term successes he describes are quite compatible with the empire's being in long-term decline, gradually losing its wealth and military power and the good will of its neighbors.

As far as we can judge from the present condition of our text, Cinnamus wrote competent classicizing Greek, with very few solecisms.[128] His style, at least after being epitomized, is clear and relatively unadorned. Along with other Atticisms, he uses the dual number in his preface to refer to John II and Manuel I, and it recurs in the rest of his history in suitable places.[129] He read at least the second half of Procopius' *Wars*, cites its author by name, and repeats what Procopius wrote about changes in place names over time, the role of fortune in human affairs, and the fall of the Western Roman empire, in 476.[130] Cinnamus seems to have been influenced even more by contemporary panegyrists, since Manuel loved to be eulogized and had many court orators and poets to satisfy his appetite for praise.[131] Moreover, Cinnamus' descriptions of Manuel's prodigious talents at fighting and hunting resemble stories of the hunting and fighting of the fabled hero Digenes Acrites, which were being incorporated around this time into the epic poem that has reached us in several versions. Cinnamus' history also shows some of the dramatic verve of the battle scenes in Anna's *Alexiad*, though its exaggerations make it less persuasive as a defense of its hero.[132] Presumably Cinnamus' history would be somewhat more effective as literature if we had the full text.

While the accidental survival of one more manuscript could have supplied us with that text, the history's failure to survive in more than a single copy, which seemingly a scribe allowed himself to abridge, suggests that Cinnamus' work was less popular even than Anna's *Alexiad*, let alone than the history of Nicetas Choniates. Cinnamus was doubly unfortunate. First, before he could finish writing, the previously robust Manuel I died, at the age of sixty-one, so that when the history was completed it did its author much less good than he could reasonably have expected. Instead of being rewarded and promoted, perhaps to chartulary of the inkwell or to protoasecretis, and seeing his composition widely distributed as an official history and praised by Manuel's courtiers, Cinnamus could only hope that Andronicus I and Isaac II would overlook the idolization of a predecessor whom neither of them wanted praised. Second, before long Nicetas Choniates wrote an account of the reigns of John and Manuel that superseded Cinnamus'

128 See Hörmann, *Beiträge*.

129 Cinnamus I.1 (p. 4: ἄμφω ἐγένεσθην), I.4 (p. 9: ἤστην), I.10 (p. 26: παῖδέ μοι ἄμφω καλώ), etc. Hörmann, *Beiträge*, p. 14, counts more than fifty uses of the dual by Cinnamus.

130 Cf. Cinnamus IV.10 (p. 159.11–13, changes in names), with Procopius, *Wars* VIII.1.11; Cinnamus V.5 (p. 214.11–19, Fortune), with Procopius, *Wars* VIII.12.34–35; and Cinnamus V.7 (pp. 218–19, the fall of the Western empire, citing Procopius by name), with Procopius, *Wars* V.1.2–26 and later.

131 Cinnamus IV.22 (p. 192).

132 See especially Ljubarskij, "John," though Ljubarskij's eagerness to praise his subject seems to lead him to overlook the signs that our text is a sometimes awkward abridgment.

work, with more literary skill, much greater impartiality, and the signal advantage of knowing that Manuel's reign was followed by a series of disasters. Cinnamus was consequently eclipsed as an historian by Choniates, and remains largely eclipsed today.

Eustathius of Thessalonica

The last Byzantine historian of the twelfth century, Eustathius of Thessalonica, was primarily a classical scholar, secondarily a religious writer, and only incidentally the author of an anomalous kind of history.[133] His many works and some other sources allow us to establish most of the main facts about his life, even if the exact chronology is sometimes unclear. He was probably born in Constantinople around 1115. He had no family name at a time when most Constantinopolitan families of any distinction did. His father may well have been a priest or deacon, since the family was without property or connections but valued learning and intended Eustathius for a career in the Church. He seems to have received his primary education from the monks of the Monastery of St. Euphemia, in the center of the capital, near the Hippodrome.[134] Then he attended the Patriarchal School, where he studied with the Master of the Rhetors, Nicholas Cataphlorum, a well-known scholar. Eustathius must have been a promising student, but after he left school he merely became a clerk in the patriarchal chancery. Although intelligent and hardworking, he had no influential patrons. He was short in stature and insignificant in appearance. For some thirty years he remained a lowly clerk. During that time, however, he must have read extensively in ancient Greek literature, especially epic, tragic, and comic poetry. Presumably he gathered material for his massive commentaries on the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and may even have begun writing them.

His erudition seems at last to have won him the attention of his superior at the chancery, Michael of Anchialus, who was also a man of scholarly interests. Early in the patriarchate of Luke Chrysoberges (1157–69/70), Michael was promoted to be judge in the ecclesiastical court of canon law, and he brought Eustathius along with him as his legal secretary. By now in his forties, Eustathius was ordained a deacon of St. Sophia and gained a post in the patriarchal treasury. After Michael obtained the professorial chair of Consul of the Philosophers, he helped Eustathius become Master of the Rhetors in the Patriarchal School, a position the

[133] On Eustathius, the consensus on general matters and controversies on specific points have recently been summarized by Metzler, *Eustathios*, pp. 3–24; see Kazhdan, *Studies*, pp. 115–95 (still valuable even if partly superseded), Melville Jones, *Eustathios*, pp. vii–xi (with his notes and appendices on pp. 161–236), Angold, *Church*, pp. 179–96, Kolovou, *Briefe*, especially pp. 3*–7* (with the most recent list of Eustathius' works), Browning, "Patriarchal School," pp. 186–93 (with the most detailed list of Eustathius' works), Magdalino, "Eustathios," Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* III, pp. 664–90, Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 426–29, Beck, *Kirche*, pp. 634–36, L. Cohn in *RE* VI (1907), cols. 1452–89 (still useful for Eustathius as a classicist), and Wilson, *Scholars*, pp. 196–204.

[134] See Janin, *Géographie*, pp. 120–24.

deacon prized. He delivered flattering orations to the emperor Manuel and wrote commentaries not just on the Homeric poems but on Pindar and the second-century geographer Dionysius Periegetes. When Michael of Anchialus became the patriarch of Constantinople Michael III (1170–78), Eustathius failed to benefit at once. In late 1174, however, he was named archbishop of Myra, in south-western Anatolia. For a professor of modest means to hold the ancient see of St. Nicholas was an honor, even though the city had become a backwater threatened by the Turks.[135] Before Eustathius went to Myra, however, the archbishopric of Thessalonica fell vacant.

With the support of the patriarch and emperor, Eustathius became metropolitan of the empire's second city around the age of sixty. He enjoyed living in the archbishop's residence, known after Thessalonica's patron saint as the House of St. Demetrius, which had a private bathhouse and a pleasant little garden with fruit trees. Eustathius kept a wine cellar and developed a taste for vintage wines.[136] For the first few years of his episcopate he spent a good deal of his time in Constantinople and delivered orations and sermons there as well as in Thessalonica. Lacking previous pastoral experience, he found his episcopal duties somewhat troublesome. He was sensitive about his recently acquired social importance at Thessalonica and had his differences with the city's merchants, its clergy, and particularly its monks, to whom he addressed a treatise on monastic discipline. In 1180 he challenged the emperor's efforts to change the statement required of Muslim converts to Christianity, and the patriarch Theodosius (1179–83) had to intercede for him with Manuel.[137] Although Eustathius was alarmed by events in the capital after Manuel's death, in 1180, he stayed on correct terms with the ruthless Andronicus I and his feckless military governor of Thessalonica, David Comnenus.[138] Yet the archbishop became increasingly exasperated with David as the Sicilian Normans approached and besieged Thessalonica by land and sea, and finally stormed the city, in August 1185.

While David fled, Eustathius was first captured by a pirate he calls Siphantos, who tried to hold him for ransom, but the Norman commander, Aldouin, apparently ordered the archbishop to be released and allowed to return to his house. Eustathius stayed in the city, negotiating with its occupiers and trying to alleviate the sufferings of its remaining inhabitants, until the Normans evacuated it, in November, after the fall of the emperor Andronicus. The archbishop delivered his account of the sack to an audience at Thessalonica, in February 1186, and had copies distributed afterwards. Apparently in 1191, his disputes with some of his flock became so acrimonious that he found it prudent to leave the city; but Isaac II's government reinstated him by 1193. Always a productive writer, Eustathius continued to compose sermons until early 1195. He must have died soon after that, however, because his successor was in office by 1196/97. Although when

135 See Hellenkemper and Hild, *Lykien* I, pp. 342–59.
136 See Eustathius, *Report* 96 (house) and 136 (wine).
137 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 216–18.
138 Eustathius, *Report* 10–11.

Eustathius was in his fifties he already spoke of himself as an old man and complained of poor health, he seems to have lived to about the age of eighty.

Our sole manuscript of Eustathius' only historical work has a title that must have been recast by a copyist but may originally have been *Report on the Capture of Thessalonica*.[139] That the word *Report* belongs to the title seems certain, because in his preface Eustathius draws a sharp distinction between a "report," written by someone who has experienced what he records, and a "history," written by someone who has not. While the two terms Eustathius uses were in fact used more or less interchangeably by ancient and Byzantine authors to mean any history, he clearly puts himself among the contemporary "reporters," implying that as an eyewitness he will give a less embellished and more reliable account but also a less dispassionate one.[140] He concludes his preface by summarizing the four parts of his *Report*: an introductory lament, the main chronological narrative, a description of the omens that presaged the disaster, and a list of the Thessalonians' sins that led God to punish them in such a way.

The introduction is largely an attack on the military governor David Comnenus and holds his incompetence and treachery chiefly responsible for the sack.[141] Then Eustathius includes a rather detailed narrative of political developments in Constantinople from Manuel I's death, in 1180, through Andronicus' seizure of power, in 1182, to the beginning of the Normans' campaign against Thessalonica, in 1185.[142] Only about two-fifths of the way through the text does Eustathius begin his account of the siege, and the actual fall of the city occurs only about two-thirds of the way through the narrative. The siege and sack take up just under half of the *Report*, including various digressions, laments, and comments.[143] Although the omens of the sack receive comparatively little space, the sins of the Thessalonians get a good deal more and conclude the *Report* on a didactic note.[144] Eustathius refers only to the very beginning of the Norman occupation of the city and says nothing whatever about its prompt and easy recovery by the Byzantines.

Eustathius held the same opinion of Westerners that he had of Andronicus I: that they were mostly but not entirely bad. He thought that the Byzantines' destruction of the Italian quarter in the capital, in 1182, and the accompanying massacre were unjust, and that they not only resembled the Norman sack of Thessalonica but helped to justify what the Normans did. He puts the population of the Italian quarter in Constantinople at over sixty thousand in 1182, without reckoning how many of these inhabitants died.[145] At Thessalonica he depicts

139 Perhaps Συγγραφὴ τῆς κατὰ Θεσσαλονίκην ἁλώσεως; the MS title begins with the words τοῦ αὐτοῦ [*sc*. Eustathius, author of the preceding text] Θεσσαλονίκης συγγραφὴ τῆς (εἴθε ὑστέρας) κατ' αὐτὴν ἁλώσεως.

140 Here I translate Eustathius' συγγραφή as "report" and ἱστορία as "history"; cf. Melville Jones, *Eustathios*, pp. 230–33.

141 Eustathius, *Report* 1–13.

142 Eustathius, *Report* 14–54.

143 Eustathius, *Report* 55–126.

144 Eustathius, *Report* 127–33 and 134–49.

145 Eustathius, *Report* 11 (on Andronicus) and 28–30 (on the sack of the Italian quarter).

himself as reasoning with even the worst of the Norman occupiers with a certain amount of success.[146] He acknowledges that the Norman commander, Aldouin, showed some mercy to the Thessalonians, executed a few of his own men who had committed crimes, paid some compensation for their depredations, and at Eustathius' insistence halted the killing, looting, and rape.[147] Several of the outrages Eustathius describes seem less than outrageous, like the Normans' singing hymns he disliked in his churches and failing to appreciate Greek books and old wines.[148] For all Eustathius' overheated rhetoric, his account shows that the sack could have been much worse.

Eustathius says that an accurate count, apparently made by Byzantines, put the number of Byzantine dead at over seven thousand, including soldiers, and says that the official Norman figure, five thousand, was too low, because it left out those killed indoors. He also mentions that Aldouin counted over three thousand of his Normans who died in the fighting and over three thousand more who died of disease while they occupied the city, not counting some who starved; the whole Norman expedition numbered eighty thousand, including five thousand knights and many unpaid adventurers hoping to win themselves loot. Eustathius accordingly observes that he and the other Thessalonians rejoiced to think that the Normans might have suffered as many casualties as their victims.[149] The archbishop overlooks that both Westerners and Byzantines thought killing enemy soldiers in wars was any soldier's duty, and that plundering a captured city was a conquering soldier's lawful reward. Nor could Eustathius reasonably have expected ordinary Norman soldiers to have a taste for fine wine and Greek prose. If the Byzantines lost about as many combatants in the fighting as the Normans, around a thousand Byzantine civilians died by the Norman estimate, and around four thousand by the Byzantine estimate. Such numbers, in a city with a total population of perhaps 150,000, suggest nothing resembling the indiscriminate massacre of three years before in the Italian quarter of Constantinople.[150] Once the fighting was over, to judge from Eustathius' narrative, the Norman army systematically despoiled the Thessalonians of their movable valuables without doing much violence to the people, their houses, or their other possessions.

Eustathius' style is elevated but not so elaborate as to be unintelligible to an educated audience. His language is Atticizing Greek, with its usual linguistic flourishes like the optative mood and the dual number.[151] What sets his style apart from that of most historians is the frequency of its literary allusions and

[146] Eustathius, *Report* 94 and 97.

[147] Eustathius, *Report* 115–16.

[148] Eustathius, *Report* 115 (the hymns), 135 (the books), and 136 (the wines).

[149] Eustathius, *Report* 106 (the Byzantine dead), 137 (the Norman dead), and 138 (the Norman army).

[150] While my estimate that Thessalonica had a population of 150,000 in Treadgold, *History*, p. 702, is admittedly a guess, it cannot be much too low if Villehardouin was even roughly right that Constantinople had 400,000 people in 1203 (ibid., p. 700 and n. 24).

[151] E.g., Eustathius, *Report* 2 (τί ἂν λέγοιντο) and 54 (τοῖν ποδοῖν). On Eustathius' Atticism in general, see Hedberg, *Eustathios*.

reminiscences, which show the depth of the author's knowledge of ancient Greek literature. Eustathius was so well read that most of the parallels to ancient authors to be found in his text probably occurred to him spontaneously. Of course they include echoes of Scripture and Homer, but also of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Menander, Hesiod, Pindar, Theocritus, Demosthenes, Libanius, Xenophon, and Plutarch, with some less expected authors like the novelist Heliodorus. Aristotle and Herodotus are cited by name.[152] Interestingly, however, Eustathius seems never to allude to Thucydides, who was much the most famous author of the kind of contemporary history Eustathius calls a "report" and had written a long description of the siege and capture of Plataea that might have served Eustathius as a model. Though he must of course have known about the *Peloponnesian War*, his own work appears to owe nothing to Thucydides in either its language or its presentation. Whatever Eustathius was trying to do in his *Report*, it was different from what Thucydides had done.

What sort of composition the *Report* was meant to be is not self-evident. Eustathius had never written history before, but he had composed and delivered many sermons and orations. He tells us in his preface that his work "has been both read out and distributed at no other time than when the preparatory hymns[?] for the holy days of fasting are [still] sounding in our ears." Here Eustathius must mean the three weeks before Lent, which in 1186 fell between February 9 and March 1.[153] During this time he seems both to have given a reading of his *Report*—probably for a small invited audience of Thessalonian notables—and had it copied and distributed, adding the preface for the published version. Our text may have taken some four hours to read aloud; though Eustathius could have shortened it for oral delivery, he seems not to have been the sort of speaker who was unduly concerned about his auditors' comfort.[154] In the last part of his *Report* he berates the Thessalonians for envy, pride, greed, ingratitude, disrespect for religion, slander, and especially the embezzlement of a sum of money entrusted to Eustathius himself.[155] While he surely wished to have a powerful effect on his audience, he also showed by having what he wrote copied and distributed that he wanted it to receive more careful attention than a single reading allowed. His composition is a hybrid, with elements of a sermon, a court oration, a didactic treatise, and of course an historical narrative.

The *Report* does make a certain impression on its readers. Much of it is obviously deeply felt, and the author emerges as conscientious and resourceful, if sometimes petty and irritable. Most of it is interesting and informative, though parts are

152 Eustathius, *Report* 49 (Aristotle) and 75 (Herodotus). For all the allusions, see the apparatus to Kyriakidis' edition and the commentary in Melville Jones, *Eustathios*.

153 Eustathius, *Report*, preface 3 (καὶ ἀνέγνωσται καὶ ἐκδέδωται), where I would read προεισόδιοι [ᾠδαὶ], since such haplography would have been easy and the adjective προεισόδιος seems to be used as a substantive only in the neuter (meaning either "preface" or "vestibule," neither of which is appropriate here).

154 See Melville Jones, *Eustathios*, p. 163, disagreeing with E. Leone, "Conjectures," who believes that Eustathius did read a shorter version to his audience.

155 Eustathius, *Report* 143–47.

prolix and trivial. It has considerable value as an historical source, not only for the events described but for society outside Constantinople and for the increasingly bitter conflict between Byzantines and Westerners in this period. Unless we believe that the similar work attributed to John Caminiates is authentic and earlier than Eustathius, Eustathius invented a new sort of history.[156] While it never became a popular or influential sort, such originality is uncommon in the literature of most times and cultures, and certainly at Byzantium. Eustathius had his faults, but a lack of confidence in his own abilities was not among them. (An excess of such confidence may have been.) He set out in his *Report* to do something that no one had done before in quite the same way. In this respect he resembles Constantine Manasses, who also combined different literary genres and seems also to have mixed oral delivery with having his work copied for private reading.

The seven historians from Nicephorus Bryennius to Eustathius form a remarkably diverse and inventive group who appear to have written for a comparatively large and diverse public. Although several of them were more interested in poetry, theology, or oratory than in history, the quality of all seven of their histories is above the average for middle Byzantine historiography. Among the four contemporary histories, only that of Cinnamus is of a generally conventional kind, and it is at least very competent. Bryennius and especially Anna Comnena wrote more sophisticated histories that were influenced by Psellus' *Chronography*, and Eustathius was original in his choice of subject and presentation. Among the three world historians, Zonaras was unusually comprehensive, Manasses turned history into verse quite capably, and Glycas produced a relatively complex moralizing history. The works of all three world historians became popular and presumably reached some readers who in earlier times would have read no history at all. While the four historians who wrote about their own times seem to have been read much less, the scarcity of their manuscripts today probably reflects not just a lack of contemporary interest but the catastrophic destruction of books during the Fourth Crusade.

[156] On Caminiates, see above, pp. 121–23.

12
Nicetas Choniates

After a burst of activity ending with Eustathius of Thessalonica, Byzantine historiography was nearly silent for the rest of the twelfth century. As often, the reason was probably uncertainty over what would happen next. Eustathius had no reason to delay recording the sack of Thessalonica of 1185, because when he wrote the sack and the reign of Andronicus I were both in the past. Yet for anyone who wanted to write a full contemporary history, the growing political instability after the death of Manuel I posed a problem. From 1180 to 1204 Byzantium had six emperors, all of whom fell victim to violence after an average reign of some four years. While a panegyrist could compose orations for the reigning emperor to extol his real or imaginary virtues, no emperor ruled long enough to be celebrated easily in a general history. Though Michael Attaliates had managed to write a history praising the short and disastrous reign of Nicephorus III, that praise appeared in a continuation of a more objective history written several years earlier. Even if John Cinnamus had continued his history and praised Isaac II after his accession in 1185, Cinnamus' long and laudatory treatment of Manuel would have threatened to overwhelm any praise of a successor. The instability of the empire was in any case such that anyone who wrote a regular history had to fear that what he had written might be overtaken by events before it was completed and circulated. Eventually Nicetas Choniates realized that the instability of the empire was itself the story, and wrote a history of it.

Nicetas' life

To his sorrow, Nicetas lived to see the empire decline from a high point during Manuel I's reign to virtual destruction by the Fourth Crusade.[1] As evidence for his

[1] On Nicetas, see especially Dieten, *Niketas* (still the most important biographical study), Simpson, "Before and After 1204" (adding some valuable observations and announcing the author's preparation of a book on Nicetas), the articles in Simpson and Efthymiadis, *Niketas* (especially Simpson, "Niketas," and Efthymiadis, "Niketas"), Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί* III, pp. 699–728, Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, pp. 429–41, Kazhdan, *Studies*, pp. 256–86, and *PBW*, Niketas 25001.

life, besides his own history, orations, letters, and other writings, we have a eulogy composed after his death by his older brother, the archbishop of Athens Michael Choniates.[2] The historian was born around 1156 in the southwestern Anatolian town of Chonae, from which he and his brother took their surname. The successor to the ancient city of Colossae and the site of a famous church commemorating a miracle of the archangel Michael, Chonae had become a Byzantine outpost on the frontier with the Turks and often suffered from Turkish raids.[3] Nicetas was named for the bishop of Chonae Nicetas, who baptized him and became his godfather.[4] The historian's parents, who had several children besides Michael and Nicetas, must have been prosperous local landholders. Respectful of both secular education and the Church, they dedicated their eldest child, Michael, to the priesthood and sent him to Constantinople, where he studied at the Patriarchal School with Eustathius, the future metropolitan of Thessalonica and historian of its sack. When Nicetas was nine and had finished his primary schooling, his parents sent him to complete his education in the capital, where he lived with his brother Michael, then in his late twenties.[5]

Under the guidance of his brother, who soon became a secretary to the patriarch of Constantinople Michael III (1170–78), Nicetas acquired a fine literary and legal education that shows he aspired to a position in the central bureaucracy. His writings reveal a good knowledge of grammar and rhetoric and a thorough acquaintance with the Bible and Homer, though not the profound erudition of Eustathius, with whom he seems not to have studied. At first Nicetas, though clever and well spoken, lacked the connections he needed for a successful career in the bureaucracy. Then, around the beginning of the regency for Alexius II in 1180, Nicetas seems to have attracted the patronage of the postal logothete Basil Camaterus.[6] Apparently Nicetas held his first government position in his twenties as a subordinate of the tax collector for Paphlagonia, a certain Constantine Pegonites.[7] Soon thereafter Nicetas became an imperial undersecretary, a position with excellent prospects for further promotion.[8] Camaterus may well have helped him obtain both these appointments. In 1182 Nicetas' brother Michael was

2 On Michael Choniates, see Stadtmüller, *Michael*, and now Angold, *Church*, pp. 197–212.

3 See Belke and Mersich, *Phrygien*, pp. 222–25, and Kazhdan in *ODB* I, p. 427.

4 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 219.

5 See Stadtmüller, *Michael*, pp. 16–21 (pp. 138–43 in the alternative numbering).

6 On Basil Camaterus (Ducas), see Guilland, *Logothètes*, pp. 62–63, and Polemis, *Doukai*, pp. 130–31, and for Camaterus' patronage of Nicetas, see Nicetas Choniates, *Letters* 2, 7, and 11, Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 170–72, 178, and 181–86, and Simpson, "Before and After 1204," p. 202 and n. 39. Though the time when Camaterus helped Nicetas must be conjectured, after winning the favor of Isaac II himself in 1185 Nicetas would hardly have needed any other patron, nor could Camaterus have become acquainted with Nicetas while Camaterus was in exile between 1183 and 1185; thus Camaterus' patronage of Nicetas probably dates from before 1183.

7 See Michael Choniates, *Letter* 3 (with Kolovou's commentary on pp. 50*–51*), and Dieten, *Niketas*, p. 23.

8 See Michael Choniates, *Eulogy*, p. 349, and Dieten, *Niketas*, p. 23.

named metropolitan of Athens and left Constantinople for his see. The brothers seem never to have seen each other again, but they exchanged letters.

In spring 1183 Camaterus joined a conspiracy led by members of the Angelus and Contostephanus families against the rising power of Andronicus Comnenus. The plot was promptly betrayed to Andronicus. The Angeli managed to escape, but Camaterus was blinded, though apparently only in one eye, and exiled along with the blinded Contostephani.[9] Michael Choniates says in his eulogy that Nicetas renounced his office of imperial undersecretary out of hatred for Andronicus' tyranny.[10] Yet if Nicetas did leave office voluntarily, he probably withdrew in fear of being suspected of sympathizing with the failed plot of his patron Camaterus. Michael tells us that Nicetas busied himself during his time out of office with improving his knowledge of the law, perhaps foreseeing that Andronicus I had too many enemies to last for long.[11] In 1185 Andronicus was overthrown and replaced by Isaac Angelus, who had negotiated his own return to Constantinople after fleeing when the conspiracy of 1183 failed. Basil Camaterus regained influence as an ally of the Angelus family and the brother-in-law of Isaac's brother Alexius Angelus. Perhaps on Camaterus' recommendation, Nicetas resumed his position as imperial undersecretary, now in the service of the new emperor, Isaac II (1185–95).[12]

At a time when many senior officials had been tainted by serving Andronicus I or killed or blinded on suspicion of opposing him, conditions were ideal for a capable young man like Nicetas to advance in the bureaucracy. Isaac may also have liked that Nicetas was about his own age.[13] Probably in early 1186, Isaac chose him to deliver an oration and poem on the occasion of the emperor's marriage to princess Margaret-Maria of Hungary.[14] Aged about thirty and started on a promising career, Nicetas was himself an eligible bachelor. On his brother Michael's advice, he married a sister of his friends John and Michael Belissariotes, rising young bureaucrats from a moderately prosperous Constantinopolitan family. Michael tells us that the marriage was a happy one, though neither he nor Nicetas mentions the wife's name.[15] Nicetas appears to have been a faithful husband, to judge from his indignation at the adulteries of others. In autumn 1187

[9] See Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 266–67 (cf. Eustathius, *Report* 36), with Brand, *Byzantium*, p. 46 and n. 40 (for the date), and Polemis, *Doukai*, pp. 130–31 and n. 11 (for the blinding in one eye).

[10] Michael Choniates, *Eulogy*, pp. 349–50, and Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 23–24.

[11] Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 23–24.

[12] While he is called simply an "imperial secretary" in the titles of the orations he composed in 1186 and 1187 (Nicetas Choniates, *Orations* II and V: βασιλικοῦ γραμματικοῦ), Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 397, refers to himself as an "imperial undersecretary" (βασιλεῖ ὑπογραμματεύων) in fall 1187.

[13] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 452, says that Isaac was "not yet forty years old" when he was overthrown in 1195, so that like Nicetas he was born around 1156.

[14] Nicetas Choniates, *Oration* V (oration) and Va (poem), and Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 24 and 87–95.

[15] See Nicetas Choniates, *Oration* XV (funeral oration for John Belissariotes), and Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 25–26 and 155–60. The Theodore Belissariotes attested as a deacon of St. Sophia

he accompanied Isaac II on his first campaign as emperor, against the Bulgarian rebels in Thrace. Although the results were at best indecisive, Nicetas depicted them as a victory in a message he composed to send back to the capital. He may also have attended Isaac on an equally fruitless campaign against the Bulgarians the next spring.[16] The emperor was pleased enough with Nicetas to promote him, probably first from undersecretary to full secretary. Around 1188 Nicetas became the second-ranking official of the imperial treasury, and by 1189 he was appointed governor of the province of Philippopolis (modern Plovdiv) in Thrace.[17]

As governor of Philippopolis, Nicetas became embroiled in the government's confused preparations for the arrival of the contingent of the Third Crusade led by the German emperor Frederick Barbarossa. At first Isaac made an agreement that Frederick's Crusaders could pass through Philippopolis peacefully on their way to the East. Yet when Frederick approached Byzantine territory in the summer of 1189, Isaac's government broke its promises and grew openly hostile to Frederick, influenced by a prophecy that he would attack Constantinople. Nicetas received orders to restore the fortifications of Philippopolis, then to destroy them to keep Frederick from using them. After Frederick occupied Philippopolis in late August, he offered to resume peaceful relations, but Isaac rebuffed him and took his envoys hostage. Nicetas, who was favorably impressed by Frederick, halfheartedly joined in the ineffective Byzantine resistance to the Germans, then reported to Isaac and persuaded him to release the envoys. When the Crusaders left for the East the next spring, Isaac seems finally to have realized that his virulently anti-Western advisers had been wrong and Nicetas had been right. Nicetas continued to enjoy the emperor's favor.[18]

By the beginning of 1090 Nicetas was back in Constantinople as the chief subordinate of the postal logothete and delivered an encomium of Isaac on Epiphany.[19] Soon Nicetas received another promotion, to judge of the Velum, and delivered another encomium of the emperor.[20] As a judge, in 1191 Nicetas was given the unwelcome task of arranging the forced tonsure and exile of the Caesar Alexius Comnenus, a bastard son of Manuel I accused of plotting against Isaac. Nicetas liked Alexius and believed him innocent, and was disgusted when after three months the capricious emperor allowed Alexius to return to Constantinople,

at a council in 1157 (*PBW*, Theodoros 244) was surely a relative and perhaps the brothers' father.

[16] Cf. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 396–99, with Nicetas Choniates, *Oration* II, and Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 26–27 and 65–79.

[17] Nicetas Choniates, *Oration* III, and Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 27 and 80–81.

[18] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 401–4, 408–11, and 416–17 (Nicetas' opinion of Frederick); cf. Setton, *History* II, pp. 94–110 (an account from the Western point of view by Edgar Johnson) and 146–49 (an account from the Byzantine point of view by Joan Hussey, rather more anti-Western than that of Nicetas), and Lilie, *Byzantium*, pp. 241–42 (a brief and evenhanded account).

[19] Nicetas Choniates, *Oration* IX, and Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 31–32 and 116–22.

[20] Nicetas Choniates, *Oration* IV, and Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 32–33 (though I differ with Dieten in dating *Oration* I not to 1191 but to 1195; see n. 23 below) and 81–87.

invited him to dinner at the palace, and made fun of him.[21] Yet Nicetas himself benefited from Isaac's caprices. A little later the emperor promoted him to ephor, apparently a high judicial position, and then to an even more senior judgeship with the high rank of sebastus.[22] By early 1195 Nicetas became logothete of the Secreta, the senior minister of the whole civil service.[23] This dizzying total of eight promotions meant that he received on average almost one new office a year during Isaac's ten-year reign, ascending from the low rank of imperial undersecretary to the pinnacle of the bureaucracy.

Around 1194, when Nicetas was still a senior judge, he wrote to ask his brother Michael for a complete copy of Michael's works, which was duly sent from Athens to Constantinople.[24] The suggestion has been advanced that Nicetas made this request because he was gathering material to write his history.[25] While Nicetas may well have been interested in his brother's writings in any case, he did use them as a source, and he cannot have begun work on his long and well-researched history much later than this, eight busy years before he completed its first edition.[26] His original plan was presumably to begin with 1118, where Anna Comnena and Zonaras had left off. While Nicetas would have needed to deal tactfully with events from Isaac II's accession to the time of writing, he could have written critically about any or all of the Comneni from Alexius I to Andronicus I without offending Isaac or the other Angeli. By selective praise or criticism of Isaac's predecessors, Nicetas could also have subtly advised Isaac to change his policies, for example by being more aggressive against the Bulgarians and Turks, less hostile to Westerners, less suspicious of domestic rivals, or simply less frivolous, all criticisms that Nicetas later made of Isaac.

In spring 1195 Isaac was overthrown and blinded by his own brother, Alexius III. Apparently the new emperor at first replaced Nicetas as logothete of the Secreta with Nicetas' brother-in-law John Belissariotes, who definitely held that

21 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 424–28.

22 The exact duties of the ephorate and the judgeship (ἐπὶ τῶν κρίσεων) are somewhat obscure; see Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 34–35, and for the two offices, Kazhdan in *ODB* I, pp. 707–8 and 724–25.

23 See Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 36–39, who is unsure whether Nicetas served as general logothete and logothete of the Secreta under Isaac or under Alexius III; but note that the title of Nicetas Choniates, *Oration* I, refers to the author as logothete of the Secreta, ἐπὶ τῶν κρίσεων, and former ephor and judge of the Velum, but not as general logothete. Although Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 61–65, prefers a date of summer 1090 for this oration, which is addressed to Isaac II on his departure for an expedition against the Bulgarian rebels, I would rather date *Oration* I just before Isaac's final expedition against the Bulgarians in March 1195 (Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 446). Since this date allows us to assume that the offices mentioned in the title were current at the time and not updated later, it would follow that Nicetas became general logothete (besides becoming logothete of the Secreta again) under Alexius III.

24 Michael Choniates, *Letter* 1 (with Kolovou's commentary on p. 49*); note the reference to Nicetas as ἐπὶ τῶν κρίσεων in the title of the letter in MS B.

25 Simpson, "Before and After 1204," p. 200.

26 For Nicetas' use of Michael's works, see below, p. 443.

office in 1196.[27] Alexius seems to have made Nicetas his general logothete, the chief finance minister, a slight demotion.[28] By November 1197, however, Belissariotes held another post, and Nicetas may already have been reinstated as logothete of the Secreta.[29] The historian later expressed horror that the emperor who had shown so much favor to him had been deposed and blinded by his brother, and such sentiments were so natural that Alexius III must have suspected Nicetas of them.[30] On the other hand, almost every experienced official had served under Isaac, and Nicetas was on good terms with Basil Camaterus, the brother of Alexius' powerful empress, Euphrosyne. Nicetas knew how to mask his feelings in his own interest and that of the state, and Alexius must soon have decided that the former logothete of the Secreta was the best qualified candidate for that vital office in difficult times. The emperor may not have been interested in good advice, but he wanted and needed money, and had to see that a certain amount of administrative efficiency was necessary to raise revenue. Nicetas played his part by delivering at least three panegyrics of Alexius, two in 1200 and one in 1202.[31] Nicetas was adroit enough to stay on correct terms with both Basil Camaterus and Constantine Mesopotamites, though Camaterus and Mesopotamites were bitter rivals for influence over the emperor.[32]

After holding so many prestigious and well-paid offices in quick succession, this former provincial of modest means had become a rich and influential man with a wide circle of friends, colleagues, and clients. He had two mansions in Constantinople and the servants that went with them. His main mansion, which he describes as "of irresistible beauty and enormous size," was near St. Sophia and the Great Palace. The second mansion he describes as being "fitted out with a colonnade, hard to approach, with a shady entrance," apparently meaning that it stood in a walled enclosure in a secluded part of the city, probably near the Blachernae Palace, the emperors' second residence.[33] Nicetas seems also to have owned another house, probably a summer retreat, forty miles from Constantinople at Selymbria, on the Sea of Marmara, from which he could return to the capital by land or sea on short notice.[34] In an oration he mourned one of his sons who died in infancy, but he had several children who survived.[35]

[27] See Guilland, *Logothètes*, pp. 79–80, noting a reference that was apparently overlooked by Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 37–38; cf. Michael Choniates, *Letters* 15 and 53 (with Kolovou's commentary on pp. 57*–58* and 80*–82*), both naming Belissariotes as "grand logothete" (an alternative name for the logothete of the Secreta) and both evidently datable to 1195–97 (not, as Kolovou suggests, to 1182–85 and 1194/95). Simpson, "Before and After 1204," pp. 199–200, believes that Nicetas first became logothete of the Secreta in 1196/97.

[28] See p. 426 n. 23 above.

[29] Dieten, *Niketas*, p. 38.

[30] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 453–54.

[31] Nicetas Choniates, *Orations* VII, X, and XI, and Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 96–105 and 122–36.

[32] See below, pp. 441–42.

[33] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 587 (for the mansions) and 588 (for the servants).

[34] Cf. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 593, 617, and 635.

[35] Nicetas Choniates, *Oration* VI and *Chronological Narrative*, p. 588; cf. Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 36 and 95–96.

Around 1197 he made a speech insisting on the incorruptibility of the Eucharist against the contrary position of Michael (Glycas?) Sicidites; and in 1200 a church council and the emperor confirmed the doctrine Nicetas had defended.[36] How much influence Nicetas had on this outcome, or on Alexius III's other policies, is hard to say. Later he expressed alarm at the direction taken by Alexius' government, but at the time he must have avoided giving advice that might annoy the emperor too much.

In spring 1202 Nicetas evidently completed and distributed the first edition of his history, which he entitled *History Beginning with the Reign of the Lord John Comnenus*. This edition, whose contents can be reconstructed from the evidence of several of our manuscripts, differed significantly from Nicetas' final version, and not only because it concluded with 1202.[37] For example, its account of Alexius III's reign begins by asserting that the blinding of Isaac II was done by Isaac's own army without Alexius' knowledge, though later Nicetas replaced this statement with a denunciation of Alexius for having his brother blinded.[38] No doubt this exculpation of Alexius was the official version, which the historian had to repeat as long as he was in Alexius' service. Later, besides revising his text in a number of places to criticize Alexius, Nicetas added several long passages to his account of Alexius' reign that evidently reflected his real opinions. These emphasize the severity of the defeats inflicted on the empire by the Bulgarians, Turks, and Cumans, the incompetence of Alexius and his adviser Constantine Mesopotamites, the plot of Basil Camaterus and others against the empress Euphrosyne and Mesopotamites, and the alleged adultery and temporary disgrace of Euphrosyne.[39]

Even without these additions, the original *History* depicts Alexius' reign as a time of troubles, which it certainly was. Once, after recording that the revolution of 1185 had interrupted Andronicus I's construction of a tower, palaces, and waterworks near Blachernae, Nicetas remarks ironically, "Those ruling after him, whichever of them have reigned up to the present, were so concerned to bring to completion this project for the common benefit, that Isaac, having deprived Andronicus of his throne along with his life, pulled down the tower and tore down those elegant palaces, as if envying Andronicus that fine achievement." Since at the time of writing Andronicus had only had two successors, the plural shows that Nicetas meant to criticize not just Isaac but Alexius for not finishing

[36] Nicetas Choniates, *Oration* VIII and *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 514–18; cf. Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 40–41 and 106–15, and Angold, *Church*, pp. 127–31. For the possible identification of Michael Sicidites with Michael Glycas, see above, p. 405.

[37] This is what Dieten calls version *b* (*brevior*), which was composed before version *a* (*auctior*), so that, despite the letters' position in the alphabet, *b* was earlier than *a*; see Dieten, *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* I, pp. lvi–ci, and Simpson, "Before and After 1204," pp. 192–203.

[38] Cf. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 453, with version *B* (evidently a misprint for *b*) in Dieten's apparatus.

[39] The main sections that Nicetas added to the account of Alexius' reign in version *a* are Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 465.32–468.24, 473.64–475.25, 483.35–493.66, 499.59–501.93, 524.84–526.33, 528.76–532.20, and 535.84–95.

Andronicus' waterworks, though the passage is oblique and unobtrusive enough that it might easily be overlooked or explained away.[40] Since Nicetas can scarcely have expected to be rewarded by Alexius for writing a history with so little praise for the emperor, the historian must have been subtly expressing his own frustrations, warning Alexius to change course, or both.

In 1203 came the Latins of the renegade Fourth Crusade, who drove Alexius III from Constantinople and restored the blinded Isaac II to power with his son Alexius IV. Isaac, quite reasonably, retained Nicetas as logothete of the Secreta. The emperor, who knew that Nicetas had taken no part in deposing him, desperately needed the logothete's skills to negotiate with the Latins and to raise at least part of the exorbitant sum that his son had promised to pay them. Nicetas, for his part, could hardly refuse to help an emperor who had been so generous to him, or to aid his country in its time of desperate need. Nicetas later declared that the amount promised to the Crusaders by Alexius IV could never have been raised, and expressed remorse for not protesting when the emperors ordered church treasures to be melted down to pay the Crusaders.[41] Yet the government had little choice. Since Alexius III had absconded with much of the treasury and remained at large, Isaac II and Alexius IV, who controlled scarcely anything but Constantinople itself, had neither enough money to pay the Crusaders nor enough soldiers to defeat them. As Nicetas struggled to meet the Crusaders' impossible demands, in August 1203 a great fire destroyed his mansion near St. Sophia along with a large part of the capital.[42]

By January 1204 Isaac II was dying and the people were so exasperated with Alexius IV that they forced the chief officials and higher clergy to meet in St. Sophia, expecting them to choose a new emperor. Nicetas was present, and his colleagues begged for his advice on who should be chosen. He says he sadly refused to speak, realizing that any emperor they selected would be doomed, because the Crusaders would defend Alexius IV against him. The people nevertheless demanded a new emperor. None of the officials would accept the crown, and Nicetas and his colleagues resisted the popular demands for two days. The mob then proclaimed a young noble, Nicholas Cannabus, in St. Sophia, but he never managed to enter either of the imperial palaces. The next day the protovestiarius Alexius Ducas seized power by tricking Alexius IV. A few days later, Ducas had himself proclaimed emperor as Alexius V. Soon he had Alexius IV and Cannabus killed, and Isaac II died. Nicetas expresses sympathy for Cannabus, but none for either Alexius IV or Alexius V.[43] The new emperor at once replaced Nicetas as logothete of the Secreta, probably because Nicetas had opposed his accession and had

[40] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 329–30; cf. Simpson, "Before and After 1204," p. 201.

[41] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 539–40 and 551–52.

[42] Cf. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 553–55 and 588.

[43] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 561–64. These events are discussed by Brand, *Byzantium*, pp. 250—51, and Queller and Madden, *Fourth Crusade*, pp. 160–65.

no confidence in his plans to fight the Latins.[44] Nicetas was therefore out of office during Alexius V's brief and catastrophic reign, which ended when the capital fell to the Crusaders in April 1204.

As Alexius V fled the city, a group of friends and relatives joined Nicetas in his remaining mansion. Nicetas had previously helped a Venetian named Domenico and his family when they were attacked by anti-Latin Byzantines, and Domenico now returned the favor. For a time he kept the Crusaders from looting Nicetas' house by pretending to be a Crusader who had seized it for himself. Yet as more and more looters arrived, Domenico became afraid that they would take the men prisoner to extort their money and rape the women. He therefore helped Nicetas and his group to take refuge at the house of another Venetian. When their servants deserted them, Nicetas' party decided to leave the city on foot by dressing poorly, making themselves dirty, and pretending to be Domenico's captives. Five days after the city's fall, in cold weather, Nicetas set out, carrying an infant son and leading his pregnant wife. Their group included many friends and relations and the patriarch of Constantinople John X Camaterus, a relative of Nicetas' onetime patron Basil Camaterus. The refugees had almost reached the Golden Gate when a Crusader abducted the beautiful daughter of a judge in their party; but Nicetas pursued the man and the girl, and persuaded other Crusaders to have her released. Eventually, probably after hiring themselves transport, the refugees arrived safely at Selymbria, whose people ridiculed their bedraggled appearance and fall from prosperity.[45]

For more than two years Nicetas and his family remained in Selymbria, where he either owned a house or stayed with friends or relatives. Evidently he had brought along some money and valuables and a copy of his history and orations, though not of his correspondence, since all his letters that we have seem to date from after 1204.[46] In Selymbria he appears to have composed a continuation of his *History* from 1202 through the sack of Constantinople. At the beginning he explains why this supplement is less detailed than may seem warranted by the importance of its subject:[47]

> Until these events, this history has been an easy journey for us, on a smooth road; but from this point I do not know how to handle my story. For what attitude can I reasonably take when I am about to describe the public disasters that the queen of cities suffered under the rule of the earthly angels [the Angeli]? I used to wish to be able to describe suitably in my history the most oppressive and cruel of all

[44] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 565, and Dieten, *Niketas*, p. 42.

[45] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 588–94 (Domenico's name appears only in MSS L and O at p. 588.13–14; the reference to the patriarch John is on p. 593); cf. Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 42–44.

[46] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 616 and 635, and Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 44–45 and 169 (on Nicetas' letters).

[47] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 535; the continuation extended from p. 535.3 to p. 582.46.

misfortunes; but since that is impossible, I shall now present my narrative in a summary, which will perhaps be more advantageous for future generations by reducing what is painful to hear and limiting further grief from it.

Although the Latins soon occupied Selymbria, and in 1205 they seem to have stolen some of Nicetas' property there, he had no safer place to go while he waited to see what would happen next.[48] After a year in which the Crusaders conquered much of the empire, killed Alexius V, and captured Alexius III, in April 1205 Kaloyan of Bulgaria defeated and captured the Latin emperor Baldwin. Kaloyan had allied himself with the Greeks of Thrace but treated them so badly that most of them joined Baldwin's brother, Henry of Flanders, the Latins' regent during Baldwin's captivity. In spring 1206 the patriarch John Camaterus, who had left Constantinople with Nicetas, died in Thrace, leaving the Venetian Thomas Morosini the only claimant to the patriarchate. The papal legate Benedict took this opportunity to open negotiations to unify the Greek and Latin churches at Constantinople. In September he met with a group of Greek churchmen who asked the pope for the right to elect their own patriarch under Latin rule. Their request was endorsed by Henry, who had just been elected Latin emperor after news of Baldwin's death. Such were the circumstances in which Nicetas returned from Selymbria to Constantinople around July 1206.[49]

In all likelihood, Nicetas hoped not only to reclaim his plundered mansion but to take an important post in Henry's government. Besides wishing to regain the wealth and authority to which he had become accustomed, Nicetas would presumably have liked to make Latin rule more palatable to Greeks and to help his many dispossessed friends. He was greatly impressed that the Latins had waited to crown Henry until they were sure his predecessor was dead, quite unlike the Byzantines, who had overthrown their reigning emperors time and again.[50] That same summer Nicetas' brother Michael came to Thessalonica to negotiate with the papal legate Benedict for the Latins' recognition as archbishop of Athens.[51] Henry had already won over some prominent Greek allies, notably the general Theodore Branas. The Latin emperor had no special reason to distrust Nicetas, who had negotiated with the Latins as a faithful official of their allies Isaac II and Alexius IV and then been cashiered by their enemy Alexius V. As a capable administrator who might have become a symbol of reconciliation between Latins and Greeks, Nicetas had much to offer Henry if admitted to his service.

Yet the negotiations for a Greek patriarch under Henry came to nothing, and neither of the Choniates brothers came to terms with the Latins. Michael left

[48] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 635.

[49] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 635 and 642, and Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 45–46. For the political context, see Treadgold, *History*, pp. 710–15, and for the ecclesiastical context, see Angold, *Fourth Crusade*, pp. 180–85, and Hoeck and Loenertz, *Nikolaos-Nektarios*, pp. 30–54.

[50] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 642.

[51] See Angold, *Fourth Crusade*, pp. 171–72, and Hoeck and Loenertz, *Nikolaos-Nektarios*, pp. 34–35.

Athens and took refuge on the nearby island of Ceos. As a newly founded feudal state, the Latin empire would have had trouble incorporating the old Byzantine bureaucracy; Nicetas appears not to have been fluent in any Western language; and Henry seems to have found no suitable place for him in the new order. Nicetas formed a poor opinion of the new Venetian patriarch of Constantinople, Thomas Morosini, and was especially outraged to see the Latins robbing imperial tombs and churches and melting down the city's splendid collection of classical statues for the meager value of their bronze.[52] Later Nicetas wrote, "The Latin is an iniquitous creature to his servants, with a language unintelligible to Greeks, a greedy mind, an ignorant eye, an insatiable stomach, an irascible and fierce spirit, and a hand that always looks for a sword."[53] Apparently while Nicetas was still in Constantinople, he composed a panegyric of the self-proclaimed emperor Theodore I Lascaris and sent it to Nicaea, where Theodore had founded a Byzantine successor state. Disgusted with Latin rule, Nicetas left for Nicaea with his family around the beginning of 1207.[54] No doubt he hoped that Theodore I would embrace him as a valued ally, especially because Nicetas' old patron Basil Camaterus was Theodore's uncle and adviser.

When Nicetas arrived in Nicaea, Theodore commissioned him to write the speeches that the emperor addressed to his officials and clergy at the beginning of Lent in 1207 and 1208.[55] Nicetas was happy to find his friend and brother-in-law John Belissariotes at Nicaea; but to Nicetas' great distress, John fell ill and died near the end of 1207; John's brother had died a year earlier.[56] Nicaea had more fugitive Byzantine bureaucrats than its small government in exile needed.[57] Nicetas claims that the officials at Nicaea ridiculed him and other former members of the bureaucracy for their misfortunes and blamed them for the empire's fall, while Theodore did nothing to defend them.[58] Despite assigning Nicetas to write his speeches, the emperor seems not to have given him much credit for his administrative experience, his learning, or his *History*, which recalled events that distressed everyone and reflected badly on Theodore's father-in-law, Alexius III. Nicetas grew tired of waiting for the emperor to offer him a position, and repeatedly wrote to ask for help from his old patrons and friends, including Basil Camaterus.[59] Some of them helped Nicetas, but not as much as he wanted. In 1208 Theodore named a patriarch of Constantinople in exile, Nicetas' friend

[52] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 647–55.

[53] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 602.

[54] Nicetas Choniates, *Oration* XIV and *Chronological Narrative*, p. 635, and Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 46 and 143–55.

[55] Nicetas Choniates, *Orations* XIII (for 1208) and XVII (for 1207), and Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 140–43 and 162–65.

[56] Nicetas Choniates, *Oration* XV, and Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 47 and 155–60.

[57] See Angold, *Byzantine Government*, pp. 147–50, though I believe that Angold exaggerates Nicetas' importance at Nicaea by describing him as "the official rhetor of the Nicaean court" (p. 149), since Nicetas appears to have held no regular, salaried position.

[58] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 644–45.

[59] Nicetas Choniates, *Letters* 2, 7, and 11, and Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 170–72, 178, and 181–86.

Michael Autorianus, who crowned Theodore Byzantine emperor in exile.[60] Nicetas may have begun writing a theological work, his *Panoply of Doctrine*, in the hope of impressing the new patriarch. Nicetas nonetheless received neither a significant office nor the respect he thought he deserved. In 1211, when he delivered a short oration on the emperor's victory over the Seljuk Turks, he mentions in a sardonic note that he used an especially clear style "because of the incapacity of the audience."[61]

Nicetas was far from destitute, but he was naturally disheartened by the destruction of the cosmopolitan society in which he had prospered and the loss of his great power and most of his great wealth. In the preface to his *Panoply of Doctrine*, which he seems to have finished around 1211, he complains that at Nicaea he can barely support his servants and has had to "build wooden houses," which were apparently much inferior to his former mansions in Constantinople.[62] In a second continuation of his *History*, which is appended to his *Panoply* in two of our manuscripts and presumably dates from around the same time, he laments that he subsists miserably at Nicaea on the grudging charity of others, "without benefiting from the emperor's assistance."[63] This second continuation of Nicetas' *History*, which covers the period from 1202 to about 1210, is a peculiar document. It begins where the first version of the *History* ended and concludes with a description of the Latins' destruction of the bronze statues in Constantinople. After recording the fall of the city in 1204, the continuation covers events that are largely limited to Thrace and the western provinces in an idiosyncratic order that is neither consistently chronological nor thematic.[64]

According to a plausible conjecture, Nicetas dedicated both the *Panoply of Doctrine* and the second continuation of his *History* to Constantine Mesopotamites, the metropolitan of Thessalonica, who was then a refugee in the separate Byzantine successor state of Epirus.[65] We have two letters addressed by Nicetas to

[60] Nicetas Choniates, *Letter* 10, is addressed to Autorianus at Nicaea before he became patriarch. (Cf. Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 180–81.)

[61] Nicetas Choniates, *Oration* XVI (see the title), and Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 47–49 and 161–62. Since Dieten wrote, the date of Theodore's victory at Antioch on the Meander has been fixed in June 1211; see Savvides, *Byzantium*, pp. 98–111, especially p. 100 and n. 3.

[62] Ed. in Dieten, *Zu Überlieferung*, p. 57.

[63] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 635 (apparatus lines 4–16, including lines 9–10 in MS O: μηδὲ τῆς ἐκ βασιλέως ἀμοιροῦντες συνάρσεως).

[64] Dieten, *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* I, pp. xxv–xxvii, describes the order of this version as follows (I add in square brackets the approximate dates of the events covered): 535.3–582.46 [spring 1202–April 1204], 585.58–603.23 [April–November 1204], 612.36–627.84 [February 1205–summer 1205], 631.17–636.65 [February 1206–1210/11], 628.15–631.16 [January 1206], 605.65–608.50 [summer 1204], 604.53–59 [1204/5], 608.50–611.30/5 [November 1204–spring 1205], and 647.1–665.65 [1206]. The latest event mentioned (p. 611.30–35, in Dieten's apparatus) is the flight of Leo Sgurus' widow to Nicaea after the fall of Acrocorinth in 1209, at a time when Nauplium was still held by Sgurus' brother Gabriel and therefore before Gabriel lost it in 1210 or 1211; see Simpson, "Before and After 1204," pp. 207–8.

[65] This is the conjecture of Simpson, "Before and After 1204," pp. 205–12.

Mesopotamites, whom he had known when they were both high officials under Isaac II and Alexius III.[66] Mesopotamites seems the only suitable candidate to be the unnamed friend who had requested the *Panoply* from Nicetas, had no copies of Nicetas' writings, had fled the Latins, and was not living in Nicaea.[67] Almost conclusively, a very early manuscript including the *Panoply* and the continuation of the *History* once belonged to a "Mesopotamites of Thessalonica."[68] Probably Nicetas, dissatisfied with his situation at Nicaea and hoping Mesopotamites could find him a better position in Epirus, sent him the *Panoply* and the continuation of the *History* in an attempt to win his gratitude, without success. Around 1213 Basil Camaterus invited Nicetas to accompany him on an embassy to the Cilician Armenians, but Nicetas politely declined, though he sent Camaterus the part of his *Panoply* on Armenian theology.[69]

Nicetas now began work on a final, expanded, and revised edition of his *History*, which he retitled *Chronological Narrative*.[70] At least the part of the *Chronological Narrative* up to 1204 appears to be as he meant for it to stand. Returning to the first edition of his *History*, he made a number of revisions and additions. With the benefit of hindsight, he introduced more criticisms of the maladministration, licentiousness, and superstition of Manuel I and Andronicus I. He also added passages that were critical of Isaac II and especially Alexius III, and of Constantine Mesopotamites and Basil Camaterus, whom Nicetas evidently blamed for not helping him at Nicaea.[71] The historian continued his original *History* with revised and rearranged versions of his first and second continuations. He prefaced his revised account of events after 1204 with a description of how Solon had tried and failed to rouse the Athenians against the tyranny of Pisistratus, implying that he had himself tried and failed to rouse the Byzantines against the tyranny of the Angeli and the Latins.[72] Feeling that he had nothing more to expect from Theodore I, Nicetas added implicit criticisms of him, removed some praise, and added complaints about his own poor treatment at Nicaea.[73] The historian drastically abridged his description of the Latins' destruction of ancient statues at Constantinople, probably because he thought it interrupted the flow of his

[66] Nicetas Choniates, *Letters* 4 and 9, and Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 173–75 and 180.

[67] See Dieten, *Zu Überlieferung*, p. 57, and *Niketas*, pp. 46–47, and Simpson, "Before and After 1204," p. 210 and nn. 73 and 74.

[68] See Dieten, *Nicetas Choniatae Historia* I, p. xxvii, Walther, review of Dieten, pp. 538–39, and Simpson, "Before and After 1204," p. 202 and n. 41.

[69] Nicetas Choniates, *Letter* 11, and Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 47–49 and 181–86.

[70] See below, p. 436 and n. 79.

[71] See above, p. 428 and n. 39, and Simpson, "Niketas," pp. 16–24. Note also the additions and changes at Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 262.1–6 and 276.20–24 (unfavorable to the patriarch Basil II Camaterus, a relative of Nicetas' former patron) and 274.25–29 (unfavorable to John Camaterus, another relative).

[72] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 583.4–585.57; but cf. below, p. 455 and n. 208.

[73] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 544 (praise deleted), 546 (praise deleted), 625 (criticism added), 631 (praise deleted), 640 (criticism added), and 644–45 (an added complaint about Nicetas' treatment).

narrative.[74] He also removed a few passages that he presumably meant to include later in more logical chronological places.[75] Yet he left the last part of the text unfinished, breaking off after a moderately successful campaign of the Latin emperor Henry against the Bulgarians in 1206.

In an early fourteenth-century manuscript of Nicetas' *History*, a partly restored author portrait shows Nicetas as a handsome and dignified man with a gray beard and gray hair, wearing the distinctive conical hat of a logothete of the Secreta, the office he held in 1202, when he composed the first edition of his work.[76] He died at Nicaea early in 1217 at the age of about sixty, mourned by his wife, children, and brother.[77] Since during his ten years at Nicaea he should have had enough leisure and sources to finish his *Chronological Narrative*, he seems to have been unable to decide when and how to conclude it. No event between 1204 and 1217 was decisive enough to make a fully satisfactory conclusion for a history. Even though Nicetas had written a panegyric of Theodore Lascaris' victory over the Turks in 1211, he seems not to have wanted to exaggerate that battle's importance by ending his history with it. After 1204, with no single Byzantine government, and numerous groups and strongmen trying to carve out states and fiefdoms for themselves, the history of the Byzantine world had ceased to have a clear focus or direction. At the time no one could have been sure which of the competing states would turn out to be major powers, let alone which (if any) might become dominant. Even modern historians find it difficult to write a connected narrative of this chaotic period, although they know that the Empire of Nicaea would eventually succeed in restoring a semblance of the Byzantine empire. Since Nicetas could not have foreseen that or any other outcome, and disliked recording the prevailing disorder, we should not be surprised that he never completed his history.

Nicetas' *Chronological Narrative*

Later Byzantine copyists and readers must often have been puzzled to discover Nicetas' history in several manuscript versions of varying lengths. Since most copyists naturally wanted to have the most complete version, they supplemented what they found in one manuscript with additional passages they found in other manuscripts, creating an unusually confusing and contaminated manuscript

[74] Cf. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 643–44 (the abridged version), with 647–55 (the original version). See Simpson, "Before and After 1204," p. 217. Papamastorakis, "Interpreting," is no doubt correct that Nicetas originally wrote this section with various historical considerations in mind; nonetheless, his final judgment was to leave most of it out of the fourth edition of his history.

[75] See, e.g., Dieten's apparatus to Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 611 and 635–36.

[76] In *Vindob. hist. gr.* 53, fol. 1^v, reproduced on the cover of the present volume; cf. Dieten, "Wurden" and *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* I, pp. xxxi–xxxiii (on p. xxxii, lines 6–7, for "*BZ* 50 [1965] 498" read "*BZ* 58 [1965] 493"), and especially Restle, "Miniaturen." On the *skiadion*, the logothete's hat, see also Kazhdan in *ODB* III, p. 1910.

[77] See Dieten, *Niketas*, pp. 49–51, and, for the date, Katsaros, "Contribution."

tradition. As a result, several of our rather numerous manuscripts combine two or more of Nicetas' own four versions, though modern textual criticism has now reconstructed those versions convincingly.[78] Useful though the differences between the versions of Nicetas' history are for understanding the historian's life and thinking, we can justifiably accept his fourth, almost finished edition as the one that best reflects his latest intentions. He had the most time to consider what he said in it and, once he had more or less despaired of improving his fortunes, little reason to distort his account in favor of anyone who might help or hurt him. This fourth edition is therefore the one that modern scholars usually mean when they discuss Nicetas' history, and it is the version meant here unless another version is specified.

The full title that Nicetas apparently gave his final edition was *Chronological Narrative of Lord Nicetas Choniates, Beginning with the Reign of John Comnenus and Ending after the Capture of Constantinople*. This replaced the title of his earlier editions, *History Beginning with the Reign of the Lord John Comnenus*, followed by Nicetas' name and a list of the offices he had held.[79] Perhaps Nicetas omitted his former offices from his title after concluding from bitter experience at Nicaea that they no longer mattered; but what he meant by altering the title of the *History* itself is not clear. Possibly he thought that a "history" should present a connected sequence of events in an orderly succession of imperial reigns, so that an account including the confused period after the fall of Constantinople could better be called a "chronological narrative." While he might of course have changed the title again if he had completed his work, in its existing form he could think of no more significant event to designate its end than the fall of Constantinople. What happened after the fall was its aftermath, the end of which remained to be seen at the time of writing.

Nicetas chose not to divide his history into a single series of numbered books, as he did with his *Panoply of Doctrine* and as Psellus and Anna Comnena had done with their histories. Instead Nicetas divided his *Chronological Narrative* into separate imperial reigns and a final section entitled "The Events That Happened to the Romans after the Capture of Constantinople." Since his accounts of imperial reigns were of quite different lengths, he divided the longer ones into sections that he called "parts": one part for John II, seven parts for Manuel I, one part for Alexius II, two parts for Andronicus I, three parts for Isaac II, at first two and then three parts for Alexius III, and one part each for Isaac II with Alexius IV, for Alexius V, and for the events after 1204.[80] The two shortest sections are those on

[78] See Dieten, *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* I, pp. vii–ci, with his stemma on p. ci and the additional observations of Simpson, "Before and After 1204." In Dieten's stemma, ζ corresponds to the first edition, β to the second edition, π to the third edition, and α to the fourth and final edition.

[79] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 1 (Dieten's apparatus) and 647 (the title, describing the discarded description of the Latins' destruction of statues as coming from Nicetas' "history"); cf. Simpson, "Before and After 1204," p. 199.

[80] The sections (Nicetas calls the parts of reigns τόμοι) are listed in Dieten, *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* I, p. xix, organized by Dieten's own numbering of nineteen books, though

the last two imperial reigns, which were not only brief but in Nicetas' opinion too painful to record in detail.[81] The longest section is the last one, which Nicetas never put into finished form. His main reason for dividing some reigns into parts appears to have been to keep each section fairly short, for convenience in reading and perhaps for ease in reference—though continuously numbered books would have allowed for still easier reference. Plainly Nicetas considered the character of the reigning emperor to be of overriding importance, for better or worse. Most Byzantines, including Psellus and Anna, would have agreed with him.

Nicetas already reveals an interest in making moral judgments in his preface, which in his final edition he left substantially as he had written it for his original edition. Besides the commonplace observation that history helps us to imitate good deeds and avoid bad ones, Nicetas stresses its value for determining whether men had been good or evil, like the last trumpet on Judgment Day.[82] He promises to use a simple style, suggesting that he hopes to be read even by ditchdiggers, blacksmiths, soldiers, and women.[83] In fact, his style is far from simple, even in the next paragraph of his preface:[84]

> The beginning of my history will be the events that occurred directly after the end of the life and reign of Alexius, the first of the Comneni to rule, because those before us who unambiguously devoted themselves to history concluded their narrative with that monarch, so that what we say may be a sort of continuation of what they have told, and our account, thus woven together, may in some way resemble the channel of a stream emerging from a single spring, or alternatively may act as a chain of links extending by the connection of their perpetual attachments into infinity.

Among the historians who had concluded with Alexius' death in 1118 Nicetas surely meant to include Anna Comnena, probably John Zonaras, and perhaps Michael Glycas. Yet the implication that Nicetas was unaware of the history of John Cinnamus, which began with 1118, is scarcely credible. Not only does Nicetas mention Cinnamus, with whom he was presumably acquainted, but Nicetas seems to have adapted several passages in Cinnamus' text for his own use.[85] In excluding Cinnamus from "those before us who unambiguously devoted themselves to history," Nicetas seems to have taken the position that Cinnamus was actually a panegyrist of Manuel I, not an historian in an unambiguous

unfortunately Dieten failed to include his book numbers and additional section numbers in his text, thus forcing scholars to use his page numbers for citations.

[81] See above, pp. 430–31.

[82] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 2.

[83] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 3–4. Nicetas' actual artfulness is emphasized (sometimes perhaps overemphasized) by Kaldellis, "Paradox," especially pp. 76–77 on this passage.

[84] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 4.

[85] See Grecu, "Nicétas," and Maisano, "Tipologia," pp. 399–402. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 331, seems to mention Cinnamus as if the author knew him.

sense; otherwise Nicetas' use of the word "unambiguously" would be hard to explain.[86] Nicetas surely thought Cinnamus had depicted Manuel too favorably. While Nicetas himself wrote a number of imperial panegyrics, he distinguished them from his history, in which he took much less favorable views of Isaac II, Alexius III, and Theodore I without feeling the need to apologize for the discrepancies. If Nicetas knew Cinnamus' history, as he evidently did, he must have considered it unsatisfactory, since he chose to supersede it when he might easily have begun with 1180, the end of Cinnamus' account and the approximate beginning of his own bureaucratic career. Nicetas wanted his own history, not that of Cinnamus, to become the definitive and permanent continuation of the history of Anna Comnena, for whose learning he expresses admiration.[87] The fact remains that Nicetas misled his readers by implicitly ignoring Cinnamus' work, which he probably hoped would be forgotten.

One place where Nicetas seems to show Cinnamus' influence is the very next sentence of his preface, which appears to echo Cinnamus' preface in saying Nicetas will describe John II's reign only "in compressed summaries" because it occurred before his own time. Nicetas goes on to say that for John's reign he has relied on "whatever we have gathered by our ear's hearing from those around us who saw that emperor, attended him when he marched against the enemy, and went through battles with him."[88] While someone who was eighteen at John's death in 1143 would have been sixty-nine when Nicetas began collecting material for his history around 1194, by then someone who was eighteen at John's accession in 1118 would have been ninety-four. No doubt Nicetas could have collected some information at second hand, for example from what a son remembered he had been told by his father; but such hearsay would have been much less detailed and reliable than firsthand testimony. Even though earlier in his preface Nicetas refers in general terms to the pleasure of hearing the reminiscences of "ancient men older than Tithonus and three times the age of a crow," he would have had trouble compiling an accurate record of John's reign from oral sources alone.[89] Cinnamus, who began collecting material at least fifteen years before Nicetas did, would have served him as a valuable source for John's reign, especially if, as seems likely, Nicetas consulted Cinnamus' history in a more complete form than the one that has reached us.[90]

Nicetas begins his account of John II's reign with a description of the circumstances of John's accession that is curiously detailed and credible in view of the time that had passed. He includes information that, if reliable, must go back to a member of the Comnenus family circle who was present at Alexius I's deathbed in 1118 and was probably the same person who heard the empress Irene's remarks

[86] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 4.69 (προδήλως).

[87] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 10.

[88] Cf. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 4.3 (ἐν κεφαλαιώδεσι δ' ἐπιτομαῖς), with Cinnamus I.1 (κατ' ἐπιτομὴν καὶ ὥσπερ ἐν κεφαλαίῳ).

[89] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 2.

[90] See above, pp. 410–11.

about the failed plot of 1119 and Anna's complaint that she and not her husband should have had male genitals.[91] The praise given to John's friend John Axuch at this point is also noteworthy, since it looks as if it comes from a panegyric.[92] The account of John II's campaigns becomes much more detailed around 1134, as if one of Nicetas' oral sources was a military man who began his service only then; Cinnamus' coverage of John's campaigns is more uniform.[93] In an obituary, Nicetas judges John II more favorably than any other emperor in his history, praising John's vigorous campaigning, piety, chastity, generosity, sobriety, and mercy, and commending him particularly for not killing or mutilating anyone. The historian concludes that "among many of the princes of the past, [John] competed with some and actually excelled others."[94] Although later Nicetas criticizes John's excessive economizing on the navy, he blames this false economy on John's minister John of Putze.[95] At least in the final edition of the *Chronological Narrative*, John II's reign represents a time of good fortune for the empire, which was followed by an increasingly ruinous decline.

Although Nicetas devotes just over a quarter of the final edition of his *Chronological Narrative* to the reign of Manuel I, this is considerably less than its share of the history's chronological span. Manuel receives a mixture of praise and blame. Nicetas acknowledges that the emperor was intelligent, vigorous, brave, and better qualified to rule than his older brother Isaac, and that his reign began well.[96] Yet the historian criticizes Manuel for adultery and incest, for oppressive taxation, for treating his officials like slaves, for needlessly and unjustly antagonizing the Westerners of the Second Crusade, and for letting astrology distort his military strategy.[97] Manuel's campaign against the Turks in 1176, which ended in defeat at the battle of Myriocephalum, is described at length as unnecessary and disastrous. In his final edition Nicetas added a halfhearted defense of Manuel, observing that unlike his successors he saw the danger from Westerners clearly, although he overtaxed, overspent, and favored eunuchs and foreigners who embezzled the taxes.[98] Nicetas commends Manuel for his courage and monastic foundations but condemns his diversion of tax revenues to unfit soldiers and his misguided meddling with church doctrine shortly before he died. The historian's

[91] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 4–12.

[92] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 9–10 and 11. See below, p. 444 and n. 132.

[93] Cf. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 12–19 (campaigns in 1118–33) and 19–40 (campaigns in 1134–43), with Cinnamus I.2–6 (pp. 5–14, on campaigns in 1118–33) and 6–10 (pp. 14–23, on campaigns in 1134–43).

[94] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 12 (John's frequent campaigns), 15 and 19 (his piety), and 47 (an overall evaluation).

[95] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 54–56.

[96] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 50 and 52.

[97] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 54 (his sexual immorality), 54–58, 60, 73, and 186 (his overtaxation), 60 and 143 (his officials treated as slaves), 60–67 (the Second Crusade), and 95–96 and 154 (astrology).

[98] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 203.75–206.47.

final judgment is negative: Manuel "accomplished nothing at all excellent for the empire, but provided quite laxly for the disposition and arrangement of what would happen after his death."[99]

Nicetas regards the beginning of the short reign of Alexius II as a decisive turn for the worse, blaming Manuel's failure to leave a competent regency as much as the incompetence of the underage emperor, his mother, Maria, and her lover the protosebastus Alexius. The historian, who was working in the palace as an undersecretary at the time, also criticizes the regents' enemy Andronicus Comnenus, Manuel's daughter, Maria, and her husband, the Caesar Rainier, who aroused a mob in the capital against the empress and her lover.[100] Nicetas' sympathies appear to lie with the grand duke Andronicus Contostephanus, who first tried to make peace between the two parties, then joined Andronicus Comnenus when he was marching on Constantinople, and finally plotted with Nicetas' patron Basil Camaterus against Andronicus' increasingly despotic rule.[101] With some exaggeration, the historian notes "the fact that most emperors ascend the Roman throne always by means of murders and shedding blood," and deplores Andronicus I's murdering Manuel's daughter, Maria, her husband, Rainier, the empress Maria, and Alexius II.[102]

Nicetas' treatment of Andronicus' reign is mostly but not entirely unfavorable. The historian cannot forgive Andronicus' many murders and maimings, which he says deprived the empire of its best generals and made Andronicus the worst of the Comneni.[103] Nicetas also disapproves of Andronicus' sycophantic officials, including the patriarch Basil II, and of the emperor's sexual promiscuity.[104] In a lengthy digression, Nicetas admits that Andronicus was generous to the poor, curbed corruption, laudably prohibited the looting of shipwrecks, built useful and beautiful buildings, enforced the laws impartially, and patronized scholars.[105] For the most part, however, Andronicus' short reign is depicted as a series of crimes and disasters, including the Norman sack of Thessalonica and the loss of Cyprus to the rebel Isaac Comnenus. Nicetas' description of the five tumultuous years from 1180 to 1185 takes up a fifth of the *Chronological Narrative*. In the vivid denouement, Andronicus' plan for a particularly savage purge provokes the desperate flight of Isaac Angelus, who kills the official sent to arrest him, takes refuge in St. Sophia, and is proclaimed by the mob, who then sadistically mutilate and lynch Andronicus.

[99] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 220. For an interpretation of Nicetas' opinion of Manuel as somewhat more favorable, see Magdalino, "Aspects," especially pp. 326–29.

[100] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 226–29 (Andronicus), 233–34 (the mob), and 241 (Maria and Rainier).

[101] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 240, 248, and 266–67.

[102] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 246 (quotation), 259–60 (Maria and Rainier), 268–69 (the empress Maria), and 273–75 (Alexius II).

[103] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 288–89 and 353.

[104] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 270–71, 276 (see p. 434 n. 71 above, on Basil II), 289, 293–94, 321–22 (Andronicus' promiscuity), 334, and 335–36.

[105] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 324–33.

In spite of the benefits Isaac II had conferred on Nicetas, the historian judges him harshly. He approves of Isaac's gifts to Andronicus' victims but criticizes him for blinding Andronicus' innocent son Manuel.[106] Nicetas attributes the defeat of the Normans who had sacked Thessalonica to God and not to Isaac, whom he blames for letting many Norman captives starve in prison.[107] The emperor is said to have promised early in his reign never to mutilate anyone again, then promptly to have broken his promise.[108] Nicetas says Isaac could have suppressed the Bulgarian rebels if he had followed up his initial victories in 1186 himself, instead of entrusting the campaign to others, especially Alexius Branas, who revolted.[109] We have already seen that Nicetas thought Isaac mismanaged Frederick Barbarossa and the Third Crusade.[110] The historian repeatedly castigates Isaac for letting himself be distracted from his duties by his love of luxurious living, particularly fine food and sexual debauchery.[111] Somewhat incongruously, after blaming Isaac's negligence for the many rebellions that plagued his reign, Nicetas accuses Isaac of unreasonably suspecting innocent men of plotting to rebel.[112] The historian concedes Isaac's generosity to the Church and the poor but says it was excessive and financed partly by unjust taxation.[113] While Isaac was admittedly a mediocre ruler, he took over an empire with serious problems and cannot fairly be blamed for all the revolts against him, which largely resulted from his having no hereditary right to the throne.

Nicetas opens his account of Alexius III's reign by denouncing Alexius' overthrowing and blinding his brother. Apart from this, the historian's main criticisms are that the new emperor was too prodigal in giving gifts and promoting officials, too reluctant to fight the Bulgarians and Turks, and too ready to agree to extortion by the German emperor Henry VI.[114] Nicetas seems to sympathize with neither side in the court intrigues that pitted the adulterous empress Euphrosyne and her ally Constantine Mesopotamites against her relatives, led by her brother Basil Camaterus. Camaterus revealed the empress's adultery to the emperor, who had her exiled and her lover killed but kept Mesopotamites in office; later, when her relatives relented, Alexius recalled his wife from exile and made Mesopotamites metropolitan of Thessalonica before he lost power again.[115] Of course Nicetas wrote this version after 1211, when he had failed to receive help from either Camaterus or Mesopotamites; but he could scarcely have asked them both for help later if he had sided firmly with either of them under Alexius III. The reason

106 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 355–56; cf. pp. 337–38 on Manuel.
107 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 361–62 and 364.
108 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 366–67.
109 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 374.
110 See above, p. 425.
111 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 384, 388–89, 399, and 441–42.
112 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 423 and 424–25.
113 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 444–45.
114 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 454–55, 459–60, 471 (the Bulgarians), 474 (the Turks), 478–79 (Henry VI), and 483–84.
115 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 460, 484–86, and 487–92; see Brand, *Byzantium*, pp. 142–46, on this whole complicated episode.

both rebuffed him may in fact be that neither had found him a reliable ally. Even after 1211, Nicetas conceded that Alexius III had a few good qualities, observing that despite his cowardly flight from Constantinople in 1203 he had been easy to approach when he was emperor, never executed a married man, and felt remorse for deposing and blinding his brother.[116]

The relatively short remainder of the *Chronological Narrative* unfolds with the fascination of a nightmare. Nicetas assigns less blame to the restored Isaac II than to his son, Alexius IV, for stupidly agreeing to the preposterous and dishonorable terms of the Crusaders and Venetians and carousing disgracefully with them.[117] The historian describes Isaac as rightly but uselessly rebuking Alexius.[118] Though Nicetas reproaches himself for not protesting the looting of church treasures to pay the Latins, he probably expected his readers to realize that any protests would have been futile.[119] He blames the city mob for destroying Western property indiscriminately and for tearing down a magnificent ancient statue of Athena that they believed was beckoning to the Crusaders.[120] While admitting that Alexius V Ducas was brave and intelligent and the only one who wanted to fight the Latins, Nicetas criticizes him for his sexual immorality and for dismissing Nicetas himself from office.[121] The historian expresses some approval for three other candidates for emperor in 1204—Nicholas Cannabus, Constantine Ducas, and Constantine Lascaris—but without suggesting that any of them was capable of defeating the Crusaders.[122] If Nicetas thought the situation was altogether hopeless by then, perhaps he should have been less critical of Alexius V, whose sexual sins and dismissal of Nicetas seem not to have made a crucial difference.

After Nicetas' rhetorical but obviously heartfelt lament over the sack of Constantinople, the unfinished sequel is absorbing, if often as disorderly as the events themselves. The section begins with its separate preface reproving both the emperors and their subjects and its dramatic description of the escape of Nicetas and his party from the conquered city. Next the election of the Latin emperor Baldwin sets off a struggle among Latins, Bulgarians, and Greeks for the empire's territory. Despite his inveighing against the Latins in general, Nicetas describes Baldwin as honorable, pious, and chaste, although the historian depicts the new king of Thessalonica, Boniface of Montferrat, as duplicitous, greedy, and overbearing.[123] While considering the Bulgarians utterly barbaric, Nicetas denounces the

[116] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 547–48. Though Alexius had executed his wife's lover, Vatatzes (ibid., p. 486), Vatatzes may not have been married.

[117] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 539–40, 550–51, and 557.

[118] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 556–57.

[119] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 551–52.

[120] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 552 and 558–59.

[121] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 561 (Ducas' bravery), 565 (his intelligence and dismissal of Nicetas), and 571 (his promiscuity).

[122] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 564 (Cannabus) and 571–72 (Constantine Ducas and Constantine Lascaris).

[123] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 597 (Baldwin) and 600 and 636 (Boniface).

independent Greeks in both the eastern and the western provinces, especially Leo Sgurus in Corinth and Alexius III, who perfidiously captured and blinded Alexius V.[124] Nicetas says of the leaders of the Greek resistance:

> Just when they should have come to an agreement and planned and accomplished not only a defense of the parts of their country that had not yet suffered badly but also a restoration of the cities that had been conquered, instead they armed themselves against each other, ruined by their passion for fame and desiring to be called tyrants.

As a result, they played into the hands of "the enemies of the Romans."[125] In this context, Nicetas' breaking off his story with a victory of the Latin emperor Henry is not wholly inappropriate.

We have already seen that Nicetas probably knew the histories of Anna Comnena and John Zonaras, though neither would have helped him much in compiling his history, because he began where they had left off. He may refer to Zonaras' history once, when he observes that "there are those who say" that the dying Alexius I gave his son John his signet ring voluntarily; Zonaras mentions that John and "others" had said this.[126] We have also seen that Nicetas probably used John Cinnamus' history.[127] We can be almost sure that Nicetas is referring to Eustathius of Thessalonica's *Report on the Capture of Thessalonica* when he notes what "certain men have summarized in a specific account and combined at length in a history" about the sack, especially because Nicetas' text shows many parallels to Eustathius's. Yet the plural implies that besides Eustathius' "history" Nicetas used another "specific account" of the sack that supplied some facts that he includes but Eustathius omits.[128]

Nicetas also consulted various writings that were not histories, like the works of his brother Michael that he had requested and received, an encomium of Isaac II among them.[129] A lost letter from Michael was probably Nicetas' source for the archbishop's clash with the local dynast Leo Sgurus and other events in the West.[130] When Nicetas wrote as a high official, he would have had access to the imperial archives, where he presumably found an official list of the lengths of imperial reigns, which he usually records, and two edicts of Andronicus I, which

[124] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 605–8 (Sgurus), 608 (Alexius III and Alexius V), 625 (the Greeks in the East), and 638 (the Greeks in the West).

[125] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 639. (At 639.77, I read τε καὶ for τι καὶ.)

[126] Cf. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 6, with Zonaras, *Epitome* XVIII.28.21.

[127] See above, pp. 437–38.

[128] Cf. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 306, with both the parallels to Eustathius and the information not given by Eustathius noted in Dieten's apparatus to pp. 223–353.

[129] See p. 426 and n. 24 above, and Simpson, "Before and After 1204," p. 200, with the parallels to Michael's *Encomium of Isaac Angelus* listed in Dieten, *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* II, p. 138.

[130] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 605–8.

he quotes.[131] He seems also to have consulted some official military dispatches and several speeches, including funeral orations for John II's adviser John Axuch and for Manuel I's first wife, Bertha-Eudocia.[132] Finally, the historian cites a half-dozen oracles, most of them from the *Oracles of Leo the Wise*.[133]

Nicetas tells us that he had oral sources, and no doubt he did.[134] One of them would have been Michael Choniates, who had spent several years in Constantinople before his brother came to live with him. The brothers presumably had many conversations about people and events. Another source was another relative, a deacon of Chonae who accompanied at least part of Manuel's Turkish expedition in 1176, perhaps not including the battle of Myriocephalum.[135] From about 1165 Nicetas could have been an eyewitness to any public event in Constantinople, and after 1180 he had excellent connections at the imperial court. Thus the source of his vivid story of Isaac II's escape from arrest in 1185 may well be Isaac himself, whom Nicetas served in several capacities.[136] His oral sources for earlier events are harder to identify. One reasonable guess is his former patron Basil Camaterus, with whom Nicetas was still on correct terms when he began working on his history around 1194. Basil was already protonotarius in 1166, though he cannot have been born much before 1140, since around 1213 he was still fit enough to go on an embassy from Nicaea to Armenian Cilicia.[137]

Another possible oral source is the general Andronicus Contostephanus, Manuel I's nephew, who features prominently in Nicetas' *Chronological Narrative* from 1144, when he campaigned with Manuel near Antioch, to 1183, when he was blinded by Andronicus I for conspiring with Basil Camaterus and the Angeli.[138]

[131] For the lengths of reigns, see Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 8 (Alexius I), 47 (John II), 222 (Manuel I), 275 (Alexius II), 452 (Isaac II), 547 (Alexius III), 564 (Alexius IV), and 571 (Alexius V). (Andronicus I is omitted, probably inadvertently.) Andronicus' edicts are quoted ibid., pp. 327–28 and 336–37.

[132] See Maisano, "Tipologia," especially pp. 393–99 and 402–4.

[133] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 41 (twice), 222, 351, 353–54 (not in our collection of Leo's oracles), and 355, with Dieten's apparatus. On the oracles attributed to Leo, see Mango, "Legend," especially pp. 62–64, and now Brokkaar et al., *Oracles*, especially pp. 23–44.

[134] See above, p. 438.

[135] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 197. Since this relative seems to have resided at Chonae, he was presumably not Michael Choniates, whom Nicetas would probably have identified by name in any case.

[136] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 341–44.

[137] See Polemis, *Doukai*, pp. 130–31, and above, p. 434 and n. 69.

[138] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 52 and 266–67. The Andronicus Contostephanus who was a general in 1144 has sometimes been distinguished from Manuel's nephew (*PBW*, Andronikos 17001 and Andronikos 17004) on the basis of Grégoire, "Notes," especially p. 156, who claimed that Manuel's nephew was born c. 1133 and was therefore too young to be a general in 1144. Yet Choniates explicitly identifies the Andronicus Contostephanus of 1144 and his brother John as Manuel's nephews (p. 52.25–26: τοὺς ἀδελφόπαιδας Κοντοστεφάνους) and never distinguishes this Andronicus Contostephanus from a later one. The conjectural date of c. 1126 for Anna's marriage is based on Grégoire's arbitrary assumption that Anna, John II's second child after his marriage

Contostephanus, who according to Nicetas was undefeated at Myriocephalum and rebuked Manuel for trying to flee, is the only figure in the history to deliver more than one invented speech.[139] Apparently born around 1125, Contostephanus is known to have lived past 1195.[140] The blind and retired general would probably have been happy to be interviewed at length for a history prepared by a protégé of his fellow conspirator Camaterus. Nicetas records that in 1167 Contostephanus received an order from Manuel not to attack the Hungarians because the stars were inauspicious, but hid the order and defeated the enemy the same day.[141] Since for years afterward Contostephanus surely pretended to have received the emperor's order too late, he was probably Nicetas' direct source for his insubordination. Though the historian must have had other oral sources, we have no obvious means of identifying them.

Apart from the beginnings and ends of imperial reigns, Nicetas, like most classicizing Byzantine historians, includes few precise dates. His relative chronology is usually sound, with one glaring exception. He puts the Byzantine expedition against the Normans in 1155–56 between campaigns against the Serbs in 1150 and 1151, then puts the rest of the Norman expedition in 1156–58 between campaigns against the Hungarians in 1152 and 1153.[142] Here Nicetas apparently erred when he compiled his narrative from separate oral sources for the Italian and Balkan campaigns, which had happened before he was born. Later, when he misdates the attack the regents for Alexius II made on St. Sophia to Saturday, May 2, of the fifteenth indiction (1182), a mistake for the fourteenth indiction (1181), his source had apparently failed to record the year, which Nicetas then guessed wrong.[143] Probably relying on his own memory from the days when he was serving as an imperial secretary, he misdates the departure of Isaac II's brother-in-law Conrad of Montferrat for Palestine to September 1187 rather than July.[144] Again presumably relying on his memory, Nicetas misdates the defeat of the Latins at

in 1104/5, was born no earlier than 1110; but she could actually have been born as early as 1106 and married as early as 1120, so that Andronicus could have been born as early as 1123 and been as old as 21 by 1144; cf. Varzos, *Γενεαλογία* I, pp. 203–5 (on John's age and marriage) and 380 (on Anna's age and marriage). Note that the future Alexius I, who was born c. 1057 (see above, p. 365 and n. 130), was a general in 1073 at the age of about sixteen. Chalandon, *Comnènes* II, p. 219, follows Nicetas in identifying the Andronicus Contostephanus of 1144 with Manuel's nephew.

139 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 154–55 and 164–66 (his speeches) and 186–87 (Myriocephalum).

140 See Varzos, *Γενεαλογία* II, pp. 249–93, with p. 291 for his death date; for his birthdate, see n. 138 above.

141 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 154–57.

142 Cf. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 90–92 and 93–100, with the dates in Dieten's apparatus.

143 Cf. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 236.39–40, with the comment in Dieten's apparatus.

144 Cf. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 394–95, with the comment in Dieten's apparatus.

Adrianople to April 15, 1205, instead of April 14.[145] Such slips suggest that the historian largely relied on his and others' recollections rather than official records or a diary, but also that his memory was fairly good.

Nicetas' other errors are few, and mostly concern the period before 1085, when he became Isaac II's undersecretary. For example, in his account of the Second Crusade in 1147, Nicetas confuses the Germans under Conrad III with the French under Louis VII, a mistake made easier because the historian calls the Crusaders "Italians," "Alamanni," and "Latins" more or less interchangeably.[146] He also misremembers the intricate family tree of the Comneni when he says that Theodora Comnena, with whom Andronicus I committed incest, was the daughter of his father's brother Isaac; Theodora was actually the daughter of Andronicus' cousin Isaac, and granddaughter of John II, brother of Andronicus' father Isaac.[147] Understandably no expert on Western politics a half-century in the past, Nicetas says incorrectly that Frederick Barbarossa was never crowned at Rome.[148] Since Nicetas had never been to Palestine, he may be forgiven for thinking that Joppa and Acre were different names for the same port.[149] While our ability to check the later part of his *Chronological Narrative* is hampered by its being our only detailed account of Byzantine history from 1176 to 1204, in most cases we can probably assume that its facts are right, since the author was a well-informed and conscientious contemporary.

Although Nicetas was not a military man, he includes a few numbers of soldiers and of ships, mainly for the years between 1085 and 1204, when he was serving in the bureaucracy.[150] Significantly, most of the figures he supplies before that period are for the fleets sent to Egypt in 1169 and against the Venetians in 1172, both of which sailed under the command of Andronicus Contostephanus.[151] The source of these figures is therefore likely to be Contostephanus' reminiscences, not the imperial archives. Nicetas was less interested in military matters than in state finance, for which he gives some valuable figures. Only two of these date from before 1185: the almost thirty thousand pounds of gold that Manuel I spent on his expedition against the Normans in 1155–58, a stupendous sum that officials must have recalled years later, and the fifteen hundred pounds of gold in reparations that Manuel agreed to pay the Venetians in annual installments beginning in 1179, which Nicetas had to know because they were still being paid until the

[145] Cf. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 617.90, with the comment in Dieten's apparatus.

[146] Cf. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 67 (Ἰταλῶν ... Ἀλαμανῶν ... Λατινικὰ), with the comment in Dieten's apparatus.

[147] Cf. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 226.72–74, with *PBW*, Theodora 17002, and Varzos, *Γενεαλογία* II, pp. 327–46 (Theodora 142), especially p. 338.

[148] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 200.

[149] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 395.51.

[150] Numbers of soldiers: Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 363, 383–84, 396, 408, and 421. Numbers of ships: Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 362, 369, and 539.

[151] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 160–68 and 172.

reign of Alexius III.[152] Later figures include sums of money looted from the palace in 1185 by a mob, given to the army and people by Isaac II, promised by Alexius III to the Turks, seized by Alexius III when he fled Constantinople, promised by Alexius IV to Boniface of Montferrat, and demanded from Alexius V by the Venetians.[153]

The *Chronological Narrative* has most of the usual trappings of a classicizing Byzantine history. Although it lacks the traditional digressions on incidental subjects, these are relatively rare even in the histories of Psellus, Attaliates, and Anna Comnena. Nicetas includes a dozen invented speeches, but not all are formal orations, and all make significant points. Thus Alexius I lectures his wife, Irene, on the importance of an orderly succession, and John II addresses his retinue on the importance of having a capable emperor.[154] Conrad III of Germany tells his men that they must free the Holy Land from Muslims, even if the Byzantines are inexplicably content to leave much of their own territory in Muslim hands.[155] Manuel I and Andronicus Contostephanus encourage their soldiers to fight with valor against the Normans, Hungarians, and Egyptians.[156] The Caesar Rainier urges his men to defend the right of asylum in churches, while Isaac II exhorts his men to defend him as the legal ruler against the rebel Alexius Branas.[157] In speeches that Nicetas put only into his final edition, Asen of Bulgaria tells his army to despise Alexius III, Basil Camaterus and others inform Alexius of his wife's adultery, and Alexius' eunuchs advise him to make a direct attack on the rebel Chrysus. Of all these speeches, Nicetas seems to disagree only with the last.[158] He assigns his final invented speech to himself: an impassioned farewell to Constantinople when he flees the city in 1204.[159]

Nicetas is a skilled and sophisticated stylist, if not a brilliant one. His difficult Greek displays the usual Atticisms and other archaisms, though not consistently.[160] Hungarians are sometimes called Paeonians and sometimes Hungarians; Serbs are sometimes called Triballians and sometimes Serbs; Turks are sometimes called Persians and sometimes Turks; and the Corcyraeans are usually called Corcyraeans but once Phaeacians, after the mythical people of the

[152] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 96–97 and 173–74. (Cf. ibid., p. 538.)

[153] Sums of money: Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 347, 357, 411–12, 445, 447, 461, 478, 482, 529, 533, 538, 547, 556, and 567.

[154] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 5–6 and 42–46.

[155] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 68–70.

[156] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 83, 154–55, and 164–66.

[157] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 238–39 and 384–85.

[158] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 466–67, 485–86, and 503–4.

[159] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 591–92.

[160] Cf. Browning, "Language," p. 121: "Nicetas, it has been observed, is sometimes incomprehensible. This is probably a reflection on our knowledge of Greek rather than on Nicetas' handling of it. … In his exploitation of the resources of 'Atticism,' as understood by the Byzantines, for the purposes of variety and novelty he pushes the resources of the classicizing language about as far as they will go. Only those who shared his wide literary culture and his classical standards could fully appreciate the ever-changing nuances and allusions of his language."

Odyssey.[161] Nicetas employs classical forms like the optative mood and the dual number often enough to show that he knows them; but he also uses Byzantine administrative titles and technical terms when he needs them to make himself clear, and sometimes he uses neologisms or classical words with unclassical meanings.[162] His literary allusions are pervasive to the point of being excessive, again demonstrating his excellent memory; but the great majority of them are to Scripture, the Homeric poems, and the common stock of proverbs and Greek myths of any well-educated Byzantine.[163] He makes no clear references to Thucydides, Psellus, or Anna Comnena, but cites and even quotes Herodotus and Plutarch and alludes four times to Procopius' *Wars*.[164] Nicetas seems, however, to have read only the first volume of a two-volume set of the *Wars*, unlike John Cinnamus, who seems to have read only the second volume.[165]

While as a rule middle Byzantine historians show little sense of humor, Nicetas, for all his moral seriousness, is wittier than most. Since he used classical allusions as a matter of course, he meant no irony just by referring to contemporary events with classical comparisons, but he could adapt his erudition to ridicule when he chose.[166] Thus he says that the self-important Constantine Mesopotamites put himself in charge of Isaac II's administration at an early age, "just as they say of the Sibyl, that as soon as she slipped out of her mother's womb she began lecturing about the structure of the universe."[167] Later Nicetas says of the idle Isaac II: "Seeking out the places with the best weather and location, at intervals he approached the capital, and was periodically sighted like that bird, the phoenix," which according to Herodotus appeared once every five hundred years.[168]

Nicetas' humor can be black, as when he has Conrad of Montferrat reassure the captured rebel Alexius Branas that he "will suffer nothing more unpleasant than having his head cut off"—an apposite witticism soon after the horrendous end of Andronicus I.[169] Sometimes Nicetas seems to misrepresent events for the sake of

161 See the Index Nominum in Dieten, *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* II, pp. 3–88.

162 See the Index Verborum ad Res Byzantinas Spectantium and Index Graecitatis in Dieten, *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* II, pp. 89–125.

163 See the Index Locorum in Dieten, *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* II, pp. 127–43, but note that many of the parallels listed there are probably or certainly not the result of Nicetas' dependence on the texts listed.

164 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 69.15–16 (cf. Procopius, *Wars* I.24.37), 71.67–70 (cf. Plutarch, *Marius* 21.3), 76.3–5 (cf. Plutarch, *Themistocles* 3.3–4), 98.8–11 (cf. Herodotus VI.119), 192.39–44 (quoting Herodotus VI.86), 259.32 (cf. Herodotus VIII.118), 347.36–38 (cf. Plutarch, *Demetrius* 16.3–4), 426.2–8 (cf. Procopius, *Wars* IV.6.30–33), 440.81–84 apparatus and 485.95–1 (cf. Procopius, *Wars* I.4.14, both times), and 584.16–19 (quoting Plutarch, *Solon* 30.6).

165 Note that all Nicetas' references to Procopius are to *Wars* I–IV. For Cinnamus, see above, p. 415 and n. 130.

166 Ljubarskij, "Byzantine Irony," especially pp. 296–97, in my opinion exaggerates Nicetas' use of irony.

167 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 439.

168 Cf. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 442, with Herodotus II.73.

169 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 387.

mockery, as when he ridicules a parody of the games of the Hippodrome staged for Alexius III's newly married daughters. Though Nicetas obviously considered such festivities beneath the dignity of the imperial family, he makes them sound idiotic by ignoring their timing during the celebration of the weddings and probably during a carnival before Lent.[170] He seems also to misconstrue as arrogant extravagance some calculated if misguided attempts by Isaac II, Alexius III, and Alexius' empress, Euphrosyne, to enhance imperial prestige.[171]

Nicetas' attitude toward superstition, which was widespread at all levels of society in his time, may perplex modern readers.[172] While he rejects and even derides some prophecies, he just as plainly accepts the truth of others. This view is of course not inconsistent: Nicetas believed that some prophets were divinely inspired but that others who claimed to be prophets were charlatans. The problem was to determine which were which. Nicetas is fairly confident about rejecting astrology, because it implied a determinism incompatible with God's Providence. On such grounds he blames Manuel I for believing in astrologers and ridicules him for relying on them when he sent an expedition against the Normans that failed.[173] We have seen how Andronicus Contostephanus defeated the Hungarians by wisely ignoring orders from Manuel that were based on astrology.[174] Manuel's astrologers also predicted a felicitous future for the ill-fated baby Alexius II and more years of life for Manuel himself when he was actually dying.[175] The historian says Constantine Stethatus, "the best-regarded of the astrologers at that time," reportedly predicted the triumph of the rebel Alexius Branas, a prophecy another astrologer claimed was fulfilled when Branas' severed head was paraded at Isaac II's triumph.[176] Nicetas remarks in a passage added to his final account of Alexius III: "The emperors up to our time fuss about the position of the stars even before taking a few steps."[177] This comment seems to include Theodore Lascaris.

Nevertheless, Nicetas was the godson of Bishop Nicetas of Chonae, whom he calls both a holy man and a true prophet. The historian quotes the bishop as predicting in 1143 that Manuel I would live longer than Alexius I but would go insane at the end of his reign, which was later taken to allude to Manuel's ideas

170 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 508–9, a passage added only in the final version (*a*); note the reference to the beginning of Lent at p. 508.83–84 (ἐγγίζων ταῖς ἀπόκρεω). Since Carnival celebrations were not traditionally Byzantine (see Kazhdan in *ODB* I, p. 382), this incident may show the influence of the many Italian merchants then living at Constantinople. Otherwise on contemporary Byzantine carnivals, see Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change*, pp. 82–83.

171 See Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 410 (Isaac), 460–61 (Euphrosyne), and 477 (Alexius).

172 For a good discussion, see Magdalino, "Prophecy."

173 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 95–96; cf. Magdalino, *Orthodoxie*, pp. 133–35.

174 See above, p. 445 and n. 141.

175 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 154, 169, and 220–21.

176 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 388.

177 Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 530.

about Islam in 1180.[178] The historian also says that he had once believed in the wild prophecies of the unconventional seer Basilacius, who by outlandish gestures appeared to predict the deposition and blinding of Isaac II.[179] Nicetas was particularly annoyed by the malignant influence at court of Isaac II's patriarch Dositheus and Alexius III's empress, Euphrosyne. Dositheus delivered prophecies that poisoned the empire's relations with Frederick Barbarossa, and Euphrosyne engaged in divination and tried to change the future by mutilating ancient statues.[180] Both Dositheus and Euphrosyne must often have vexed and frustrated Nicetas when he was serving in the administrations of Isaac and Alexius. In contrast with the predictions of such impostors, the historian cites accurate prophecies to deepen the sense of doom that gripped the empire as his *Chronological Narrative* goes on. At the same time, his indignation against false prophecies reinforces his underlying argument that the empire was ruined by bad emperors and their evil advisers.

Nicetas and the decline of the empire

Most great histories have a theme. Herodotus told of the rise of the Greek city-states; Thucydides wrote of the decline of Athens; Polybius was the historian of the rise of the Roman Republic; and Nicetas was the unfortunate historian of the decline of Byzantium. He laments: "What an unlucky historian I am! With what evils have I dealt! To what misfortunes of mine and my race am I devoting my history!"[181] Neither he nor Thucydides knew when he began his history how severe the decline of his country would be, and neither was able to revise his work completely or to bring it to a proper conclusion before his death. Neither of them made a detailed analysis of the reasons for his country's decline, though both assigned blame to people they disliked. The two share the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary historians who were themselves participants in the events they recorded but lacked the full benefit of hindsight. As the authors of finished works that went back centuries before their own times, Herodotus and Polybius had advantages when they recorded the triumph of the Greeks and Romans that Thucydides and Nicetas lacked when they recorded the fall of the Athenian and Byzantine empires. Yet Nicetas was preoccupied by the reasons for Byzantium's decline and had much to say about them.

[178] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 219–20.

[179] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 448–50; cf. Magdalino, "Prophecy," pp. 70–72.

[180] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 403–8 (Dositheus) and 519–20 (Euphrosyne). On Dositheus, see also Magdalino, "Prophecy," pp. 66–69. The bristling, fighting bronze boar whose snout was cut off by Euphrosyne may well be the bristling, wounded bronze boar with a missing snout now in the Istanbul Archeological Museum (inventory no. 2577m). It could easily have been carried off to Adrianople as booty after 1204, and the circumstances of its discovery near Adrianople as described by Hamdy, "Sanglier," and Devambez, *Grands bronzes*, pp. 13–19 (plates III–V), are murky enough to leave doubts about the story that its snout was cut off by a peasant seeking treasure and was then lost.

[181] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 634.

Identifying the reasons for that decline is not a simple problem, and modern historians still disagree about it. Most of us, however, have reached the conclusion that neither the Byzantine economy nor Byzantine culture suffered any serious decline before the Fourth Crusade. We have seen that Byzantine historians still produced excellent work and, like other writers, depicted a wealthy and cultured society. After Alexius I recovered western Anatolia and Greece, the empire retained its richest provinces until the Crusaders came. The loss of central Anatolia to the Turks and of the territory north of the Balkan range to the Bulgarians and Serbs did little harm to the empire's economy, because those regions were comparatively poor and unproductive. Their loss did, however, compromise the empire's security, because it left western Anatolia and Thrace vulnerable to Turkish and Bulgarian raids and invasions. Moreover, those losses demonstrated the empire's difficulties in defending or recovering its territory. Byzantium succumbed to the Fourth Crusade not because it was impoverished but because, for whatever reasons, it failed to defend itself successfully.[182] In 1196 Alexius III hoped to impress the ambassadors of the German emperor by showing them the splendor of the Byzantine court. As Nicetas realized, the Germans simply decided that the Byzantines could afford to pay a handsome tribute, which Alexius had to concede.[183]

In theory, the failure of the empire to defend itself could have had several different explanations, any combination of which could be correct. The government may have failed to collect sufficient revenues to pay for its defenses; it may have failed to spend enough of its revenues on its defenses; it may have misspent its revenues on its defenses; it may have failed to deploy its defenses well enough; and it may have had enemies who were too strong for its defenses to withstand. Of these five possible explanations, Nicetas seems to exclude the first, a failure to raise enough revenue. On the contrary, he denounces the excessive and oppressive taxes levied during the reigns of Manuel I, Isaac II, and Alexius III, which together accounted for all but five of the sixty years before the Fourth Crusade.[184] Apparently in Nicetas' opinion Byzantium had the resources it needed to defend itself, and the state appropriated more than enough of those resources to meet its defensive requirements. The historian, however, seems to adopt all four of the other possible explanations for the empire's decline, though in various ways and to different extents.

Nicetas believed that in the earlier part of John II's reign the Byzantine army and navy had both been formidable. He praises John for keeping the army in good condition by making frequent campaigns, though late in John's reign the historian observes, probably repeating the complaint of a veteran whom he had interviewed, that the emperor overworked his army and suffered reverses as a result.[185] Later Nicetas makes the more serious charge that John II, on the advice

[182] See my discussion in Treadgold, *History*, pp. 667–706.

[183] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 477–78.

[184] See Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 54–58, 60, 73, 186, and 204–5 (Manuel), and 437, 483, and 537–38 (Isaac and Alexius).

[185] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 12 and 77 (John's keeping his army strong) and 33–35 (John's overworking his army), and 77.

of his finance minister John of Putze, slashed spending on the navy, so that after Manuel I followed the same minister's advice the empire remained highly vulnerable to pirates and other enemies right up to Nicetas' time.[186] Despite the weakness of the navy, Nicetas implies that the army was still as strong as it had been under John when Manuel sent it against the Normans in 1148.[187] The historian nonetheless believed that Manuel's expedition against the Norman kingdom in 1155–58 was an enormous waste of money, observing that the emperor himself eventually came to the same conclusion.[188] Apparently referring to the time when Manuel was preparing for the campaign that led to the ruinous battle of Myriocephalum in 1176, Nicetas sharply criticizes the emperor for assigning large grants of tax revenues to attract and support unfit, untrained, and undisciplined recruits.[189]

A recurrent theme in the *Chronological Narrative* is the tragic failure of the Byzantines to recover the Anatolian Plateau. This obvious fact is seldom mentioned by other Byzantine historians who wrote after the Turkish invasion of the 1070's, leaving many modern scholars with the impression that most Byzantines had ceased to regard retaking central Anatolia as a serious problem, or at any rate as a serious possibility.[190] As Nicetas reminds us, however, he was a native of Chonae, which lay on the Turkish frontier at the time. As such he was acutely aware that the Turks not only threatened his home town but were occupying lands that had formerly been Byzantine and were still largely inhabited by Christians. The historian is obviously expressing his own opinion when in an invented speech he has Conrad III of Germany say of the Turks:[191]

> I cannot imagine how the Roman people, their victim, raises those wolf cubs for itself and ignobly nourishes them with its own blood, when it ought to recover both its valor and the good sense of an intelligent man and drive them away from its lands and cities like wild beasts from its herds.

A bit later the historian explicitly reproaches recent Byzantine rulers for their "cowardice and idleness" in not reconquering the former Byzantine provinces of "Phrygia, Lycaonia, and Pisidia" in Anatolia.[192] Later still Nicetas addresses to God

[186] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 54–56, a passage that is substantially the same in Nicetas' original edition (*b*). Thus the "now" (νῦν) at p. 55.18 originally referred to 1202, though of course the weakness of the Byzantine navy became even more apparent in 1203–4.

[187] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 77.

[188] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 96–97.

[189] Cf. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 178 (Manuel's extensive recruitment before the campaign of Myriocephalum) and 208–9 (Manuel's extensive and misguided recruitment, evidently at the same time).

[190] For references to Chonae as Nicetas' home town, see Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 178, 219, 400, and 638.

[191] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 70.

[192] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 72.

a heartfelt lamentation on the plight of the Anatolian Christians under Turkish rule and of the Byzantines suffering from Turkish raids.[193]

Modern historians have probably been too ready to assume that the recovery of the interior of Anatolia was beyond Byzantine power, or at least not worth the effort and expense. The troops and treasure that Manuel wasted on trying to retake southern Italy, Cilicia, and Antioch, if applied competently and consistently to Anatolia, would almost certainly have sufficed to conquer the squabbling Turkish states, which the Crusaders marched through with little opposition. After the interior had been retaken, Anatolia would have been much easier to defend than Italy, Cilicia, or Antioch, and could once again have contributed the military manpower and strategic depth that had ensured Byzantine military resilience up to the eleventh century. Control of Anatolia up to the Taurus Mountains would also have given the empire a defensible frontier, which it lacked in the twelfth century, and would have stopped the raids that were virtually inevitable as long as independent Turks lived within the Taurus. As it was, Nicetas observes that the Anatolian Turks constantly extorted money from the emperor in return for not raiding Byzantine territory, then raided it anyway.[194] Of course, dislodging the Turks from Anatolia required a powerful army, strategic skill, and a certain amount of luck, as Manuel discovered when he finally tried to take Iconium from the Turks and came to grief at Myriocephalum. While Nicetas explains why he thinks that campaign failed, he shows less sympathy for its aims than might have been expected from an author so interested in reconquering Anatolia.[195] Evidently he thought, with some reason, that what Manuel did was too little, too late.

Instead of retaking the Turkish part of Anatolia from Muslims, Manuel was obsessed with reclaiming southern Italy, Cilicia, and Antioch from Western Christians and their Armenian Christian allies. Some modern scholars have thought that Nicetas was anti-Latin even before the Fourth Crusade, for which he condemns the Crusaders unmistakably and unreservedly. This view, however, is at best an oversimplification.[196] Nicetas insists that, contrary to the fears of Manuel I and Isaac II, the Second and Third Crusades were directed only against Muslims and posed no serious threat to Byzantium.[197] Besides the undeserved suspicions that the emperors showed toward both those Crusades, the historian mentions other instances in which Byzantines treated Westerners unjustly and unwisely, selling food to the Crusaders at inflated prices, taxing Italian merchants in violation of their treaties, and refusing the final installment of the reparations owed to the Venetians.[198] As already noted, Nicetas admired Frederick Barbarossa, received

[193] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 116–17.

[194] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 122–25, 175, 192, 262, 367–68, and 461.

[195] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 177–80.

[196] See the discussion in Harris, "Distortion," arguing convincingly that Nicetas' main concern was not with the Latins but with the Byzantines' response to them.

[197] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 61–62 (the Second Crusade) and 403–4 (the Third Crusade).

[198] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 66–67 and 537–38.

help in 1204 from a Venetian whom he had befriended earlier, and was seemingly prepared to serve the Latin emperor Henry in 1206.[199] Doubtless Nicetas preferred aristocratic and cultivated Westerners to lowborn and uneducated ones, but he felt much the same way about Byzantines. While he was well aware that the Latins had a language and customs that differed from his, and was particularly resentful when certain Latins thought themselves superior in military prowess and even in culture to Byzantines, he felt no instinctive hostility to Westerners.[200] He certainly believed that to antagonize them unnecessarily was irresponsible. He commends Manuel for finally deciding not to fight the Western powers but to manage them by alliances and diplomacy.[201]

Although Nicetas never sums up his criticisms in a connected argument, he leaves no doubt that he thought the empire had spent too little on defense, had misdirected its resources away from the navy under John II and toward paying unfit recruits under Manuel, had largely misused its forces by not trying to retake its lost Anatolian lands, and had senselessly alienated the Crusaders and Venetians who in 1204 proved too strong to resist. Nicetas appears to share the opinion he attributes to Manuel: that at least after the battle of Myriocephalum the Byzantine army and navy were too weak to resist any large Western force.[202] In the end, since the Angelus emperors were all descendants of Theodora Comnena, a daughter of Alexius I, and since Alexius III preferred to be called a Comnenus, Nicetas lumped the Comneni and Angeli together as a single dynasty of fools and knaves.[203] He writes in a passage that he added after 1204:[204]

> If anything was the main cause of the Roman empire's falling to its knees, and suffering losses of territories and cities, and finally being completely destroyed, it was the renegades and emperors of the Comnenus family; for, going off to lodge with peoples who had no friendly intentions toward the Romans, the Comneni were the ruin of their homeland, and even when they chose to try to be content with our empire and rule it, they were pernicious and the most useless and stupid of all men.

Besides condemning every emperor from 1081 to 1204, these words recall the foreign escapades of Andronicus I before he became emperor and Alexius IV's flight to the West and agreement with the Venetians and Crusaders. The latter certainly did prove catastrophic for the empire.

No doubt Nicetas blamed Alexius III for fleeing Constantinople and allowing the Crusaders and Venetians to install Alexius IV.[205] Once that had happened,

[199] See above, pp. 425, 430, and 431.

[200] See above, p. 432 and n. 53.

[201] Cf. Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 199–200 and 203–4 (a passage added after 1204).

[202] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 199.

[203] For Alexius III's assuming the name Comnenus, see Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 459 (added after 1204).

[204] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 529.

[205] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 546–47.

however, the historian seems unsure quite what should or could have been done to avert the full catastrophe. When asked his opinion at the conference in St. Sophia in January 1204, he says he simply wept in silence.[206] He might actually have been able to become emperor himself at the time, but he was unwilling to step forward, probably because he had no clear conception of how to deal with the crisis. He was certainly sorry that the Varangians had fled and that many of the people of Constantinople had welcomed the Latins when they stormed the city, but he never implies that by that time any form of resistance would have had much chance of success.[207] Despite his implicit comparison of himself to Solon when he exhorted the Athenians to resist Pisistratus, Nicetas never tells us that he exhorted the Byzantines to fight the Latins or to overthrow any emperors.[208] He clearly states that after the fall of Constantinople the various Greek "tyrants" should have united against the Latin enemy, but he seems not to have had much hope that any such cooperation would occur. Though after settling at Nicaea himself he might have been expected to argue that the other Greeks should submit to Theodore Lascaris as the most promising leader of the resistance, Nicetas seems to consider Theodore just another "tyrant."[209]

In a passage added after 1204 to his account of Manuel I, the historian denounces not just all the emperors of his time but seemingly every ruler in history. He declares:[210]

> Every ruler is fearful and suspicious, and loves to wreak destruction like Death, Chaos, and Erebus by cutting down the aristocracy, putting out of the way everyone prominent and exalted, throwing out the best counselor with the trash, and mowing down the great and skillful general. … Indeed, [rulers] generally make war against Providence and are insolent to the Divinity, eviscerating and slaughtering like sacrificial animals every good man from the masses, simply so that they may be able to squander and dissipate the public goods by themselves in tranquility as their own ancestral inheritance, to treat free men like slaves, and to use as if they had bought them men often more fit to rule than they are, because they perceive badly, are deprived of sense by their power, and foolishly forget the events of a few days before.

Here Nicetas seems to be recalling not merely his disappointment with Theodore I but his ostensibly successful career in the bureaucracy under Isaac II, Alexius III, and Alexius IV.

Like Michael Psellus, John Zonaras, and doubtless many other Byzantine bureaucrats, Nicetas appears to have thought that the ideal Byzantine government

[206] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 562.
[207] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 572–73.
[208] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 583–85.
[209] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, pp. 638–39.
[210] Nicetas Choniates, *Chronological Narrative*, p. 143. For the unclassical word ἐκχορδεύω, see the Index Graecitatis in Dieten, *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* II, p. 116. Otherwise on this passage, cf. Magdalino, "Aspects," especially pp. 326–27.

would be run by wise officials like himself. We may readily admit that Nicetas would have been a better ruler than the unsatisfactory emperors he served. On the other hand, Constantine IX had been a disastrous emperor despite selecting and relying on an outstanding group of ministers, and Basil II had been an extremely successful emperor despite treating his generals and advisers rather like slaves. For all their faults, Isaac II, Alexius III, and Alexius IV promoted or retained Nicetas as their leading minister, though he was no relative of theirs and had little to recommend him but his ability. Out of laziness, prudence, or both, all three emperors were more than willing to delegate responsibility to their officials, even if they appointed along with Nicetas a number of officials whom he considered less capable than himself. If pressed, the historian would probably have acknowledged that in government there is no substitute for competence, and that a contentious group of bad officials, or of good and bad officials, or perhaps even of good officials, could govern just as badly as a bad monarch.

Nevertheless, Nicetas had an unusually clear and sensible conception of the military, financial, and diplomatic policies that he thought the empire should have pursued but did not—a clearer and more sensible conception than Michael Psellus, Michael Attaliates, John Zonaras, or any other middle Byzantine historian seems to have had. Nicetas expressed his ideas in a well-written and consistently interesting history that evidently found more readers than any work of contemporary history since Procopius' *Wars*. Nicetas' *Chronological Narrative* is more carefully and judiciously composed than Psellus' *Chronography*, and more objective and perceptive than Anna Comnena's *Alexiad*. Easily superior to every other middle Byzantine historian but Psellus and Anna, Nicetas incorporates most of their strengths and adds strengths of his own. His history's main defect is that it is unfinished, lacking a proper account of the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade or any real conclusion. Probably the author, who died only at the threshold of old age, never made a conscious decision not to finish his work. We, however, can imagine his being unable to decide not just how to conclude it but whether there was much point in his finishing it at all. From his point of view, events had become too tragic to record or to read without anguish, and any wisdom that he could impart would come too late.

13
The Historians as a Group

Byzantine historiography was remarkably resilient. Middle Byzantine historians appeared at a rate of about one every eleven years, while early Byzantine historians had appeared at a rate of about one every eight years.[1] That Byzantine historians were almost as common in the middle period as in the early period is somewhat surprising, because by the seventh century the group that had produced most of the earlier historians had ceased to exist. Most early Byzantine historians came from the class of provincial city councilors called decurions, even if most decurions who became historians moved to Constantinople and became lawyers or civil servants. Yet the class of decurions was already in serious decline by the sixth century, when they felt so burdened by their responsibilities for collecting taxes that many sought to escape their duties by any feasible means. In the early seventh century the decurions vanished as a class, along with the empire's whole system of civic government. The disappearance of the class that had largely written history was followed, not surprisingly, by a lapse in historiography. Although Byzantium still had prosperous provincial landowners in the middle period, they seem not to have been much interested in education or literature or in moving

[1] For the middle historians see the table on pp. 490–92 below, and for the early historians see the similar table in Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 382–84; but to the forty early historians listed in the latter table, I would now add five more authors of mostly lost histories whom I previously overlooked: Eusebius of Emesa and Euzoïus of Antioch in the fourth century (see above, p. 69 and n. 123), Irenaeus of Tyre in the fifth century (see Millar, *Greek Roman Empire*, pp. 160, 168–81, and 219–21), Andronicus (of Alexandria?) in the sixth century (see above, p. 69 and n. 122), and the continuer of John of Antioch c. 645. (See above, pp. 3–5 and n. 8.) Since I may still have overlooked some historians, and some of my decisions about which authors should be counted as historians are debatable, the numbers of forty-three middle Byzantine historians between 720 and 1202 and forty-five early Byzantine historians between 277 and 645 are merely suggestive; but these numbers are still comparable to each other in the sense that they were reached by similar methods and with similar criteria. See now Janiszewski, *Missing Link* (a book that appeared too late for me to consult in my *Early Byzantine Historians*), for a comprehensive list of Greek pagan historians from c. 250 to c. 400, including some who wrote before my starting date (c. 300), others whom for various reasons I did not count as historians, and a few who I believe were invented by John Malalas.

to the capital, at least until the tenth century. The first middle Byzantine historian to appear after an interval of silence in the early eighth century, Trajan the Patrician, already came from the group that was to make up the majority of middle Byzantine historians: the central bureaucracy. In the middle period, the bureaucracy consisted mostly of natives of the capital from established civil-service families, though provincials could join it as well.

Another reason for finding the resilience of Byzantine historiography remarkable is that members of the central bureaucracy of the middle period were far fewer than the decurions of the early period. The decurions in the eastern part of the empire in the early Byzantine period can be estimated at around fifty thousand.[2] The members of the Byzantine bureaucracy in the ninth century can be estimated at about six hundred, though to judge from the remarks of Psellus and Attaliates that number increased greatly in the eleventh century, and perhaps doubled.[3] While neither estimate can be more than a rough guideline, the decurions were surely a far larger group than the middle Byzantine bureaucracy. Of course, both groups were considerably smaller than the total number of Byzantines with at least some secondary education. In the early period these included about two thousand senators, about a thousand bishops, and about fifteen thousand bureaucrats, along with monks, clergy, lawyers, teachers, provincial officials, and others who may have brought the total to around a hundred thousand, of whom many would of course not have cared to read history.[4] In the middle period, with a smaller population and the loss of Egypt, Syria, and other provinces, people with some secondary education were surely far fewer than in the early period, perhaps totaling around ten thousand.[5] After such a vast decline in the group with the sort of education that allowed them to read and write history, we could reasonably have expected a far greater drop in the number of Byzantine historians than actually occurred.

The dominance of bureaucrats among middle Byzantine historians caused them to differ from early Byzantine historians in another way. Unlike the early

[2] Treadgold, *History*, pp. 139–41.

[3] See Treadgold, *Byzantine State Finances*, pp. 41–46 and 111–14 (estimating that the central bureaucracy had about 605 men in 899); cf. Kazhdan and McCormick, "Social World," pp. 175–76. For the subsequent expansion of the bureaucracy, see Psellus, *Chronography* V.15–16, VI.29–30, VII.2, and VIIa.15, and Attaliates, *History*, pp. 11, 18, 60, 71, and 272–73.

[4] Cf. Treadgold, *History*, pp. 141–42.

[5] Cf. Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism*, pp. 296–98, who calculates that in the tenth century the regular secondary schools of Constantinople, not counting private tutors and teachers in the provinces, may have taught two to three hundred students at a time, and observes that this "is an extremely small number. It was much greater in the early period, and I believe that it was to revert to [greater] numbers from the eleventh century, though perhaps without reaching the same level." See also Mango, *Byzantium*, p. 237: "In the Early Byzantine period the curial class [i.e., the decurions] formed [a reading] public, though it was doubtless diminishing. … But as the cities declined, the reading public also vanished." For a neo-Marxist interpretation of the "transformation" of the empire's "senatorial elite" in the seventh and eighth centuries, which in my opinion presupposes a more formal class system than existed at the time, see Haldon, "Fate."

Byzantine historians, most of whom had little contact with the highest echelons of government, most of the middle Byzantine historians had a much more intimate knowledge of the central administration of their time. A number of the middle Byzantine historians were senior officials, and several were important historical figures in their own right. Symeon the Logothete, Michael Psellus, and Nicetas Choniates advanced to the very top of the bureaucracy, a level at which they saw the emperor frequently. Imperial secretaries, like Joseph Genesius, John Cinnamus, and the young Nicetas Choniates, would have attended the emperor at least as often. The patriarchs Tarasius, Nicephorus, and Photius, after writing histories when they were chancery officials, became heads of the Byzantine Church. Anna Comnena was the daughter of an emperor; her husband, Nicephorus Bryennius, was Caesar; and Constantine VII was the emperor himself. All these historians were more familiar with ruling circles than any early Byzantine historian but Peter the Patrician, who seems to have written little about those circles.[6] Whereas most early Byzantine historians had little direct knowledge of contemporary politics, most middle Byzantine historians knew contemporary politics from their own experience.

The historians

As with the early Byzantine historians, our information about most of the middle Byzantine historians is often incomplete, imprecise, or uncertain, and not just because around two-fifths of their histories have failed to reach us intact.[7] For one thing, we cannot be sure quite how many middle Byzantine historians there were, and we may even disagree about which authors should be called historians. Besides the forty-three historians discussed here, a few more may have been overlooked.[8] Some scholars would maintain that John Caminiates should be included as a tenth-century historian rather than excluded as a fifteenth-century forger.[9] Were we to include very brief chronicles, we could add twelve anonymous chroniclers to our roster, and additional brief chronicles must also have been overlooked or lost.[10] On the other hand, five fairly short chronicles that are included here could be excluded because of their brevity: Nicephorus' *Concise Chronography*, Peter of Alexandria's *Brief Survey*, the "Chronicle of Monemvasia," the "Chronicle of Cambridge," and the "Chronicle of Brussels." Then too, some of us may not count as historians either Photius or Ignatius the Deacon, who are considered here

6 On Peter, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 264–69.

7 The partly lost histories are noted in the table on pp. 490–92 below.

8 For five early Byzantine historians whom I previously overlooked, see p. 457 n. 1 above.

9 See above, pp. 121–23.

10 The surviving brief chronicles, most of them from after 1204, are collected in Schreiner, *Kleinchroniken* I, of which nos. 2, 3, 5, 6, 15, 17, 18, 24, 45, 110, and 111 probably belong to the middle Byzantine period (not counting no. 1, the *Great Chronography*, whose unknown author is listed here among the middle Byzantine historians because what we have of his work is not a complete short chronicle but fragments of a much longer history).

to be literary historians of an anomalous sort. The number of forty-three middle Byzantine historians is therefore to some extent arbitrary.

Among these forty-three, only twenty-three are identified by name in manuscripts of their works. Seven more can be identified with a fair degree of confidence from other evidence.[11] The identities of another seven historians can be guessed with somewhat less confidence: Tarasius as the continuer of Trajan, Sergius Confessor as the *Scriptor Incertus*, Arethas as the author of the "Chronicle of Monemvasia," Nicetas the Paphlagonian as the author of the "secular and sacred history," Theodore Daphnopates as the author of the *Life of Basil* and *Theophanes Continuatus*, Nicephorus the Deacon as the author of the History to 971, and John the Monk as Scylitzes' source for the years before 1057. However, since Sergius Confessor, Nicetas the Paphlagonian, Theodore Daphnopates, Nicephorus the Deacon, and John the Monk are all described as historians in our sources, if any of them has been misidentified here we should increase the total number of historians accordingly. The half-dozen remaining authors of histories remain anonymous.[12] Even when we know the historians' names, we can only conjecture some of the main facts about their lives, such as their birthdates, birthplaces, and family backgrounds. Sometimes we have no basis even for a guess.

We know or can reasonably conjecture something about the family backgrounds of twenty-nine of our historians. Two of them, Constantine VII and Anna Comnena, were the children of emperors, and another, Anna's husband, Nicephorus Bryennius, came from the class of great aristocratic landowners. Sixteen or seventeen other historians, the majority, seem to have come from civil-service families.[13] Besides these, Theophanes was the son of a military official, and George Syncellus may have come from a family of civil servants in the caliphate. All these children of officials would have enjoyed a certain measure of wealth and social status. Five more historians seem to have come from provincial landowning families, who were roughly equivalent to the former class of

[11] Some scholars may still doubt some of these seven identifications: Trajan the Patrician as the common source of Nicephorus and Theophanes to 720; Theognostus the Grammarian as the main (indirect) source of Genesius, *Theophanes Continuatus*, and Pseudo-Symeon from 811 to 829; Ignatius the Deacon as the compiler of the Hesychius Epitome; Manuel the Protospatharius as the main source of Symeon the Logothete from 921 to 948; Theodore of Side as the common source of John Lazaropulus, Scylitzes, and Zonaras from 811 to 976; Theodore of Sebastea as the main source of Scylitzes from 976 to 1025; and Demetrius of Cyzicus as the main (indirect) source of Scylitzes from 1025 to c. 1043.

[12] These are the author of the *Great Chronography*, the ninth-century author of the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829 and its further Continuation from 829 to 844 (probably both by the same author), the author of the History of Basil and Leo, Pseudo-Symeon, and the authors of the "Chronicle of Cambridge" and "Chronicle of Brussels."

[13] These are Trajan, Tarasius(?), Nicephorus, Sergius Confessor(?), Photius, the ninth-century author of the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829 and its further Continuation from 829 to 844(?), the author of the History of Basil and Leo(?), Theodore Daphnopates(?), Genesius, Manuel the Protospatharius(?), Symeon the Logothete, Pseudo-Symeon(?), Psellus, John Zonaras, and John Cinnamus. If the author of the *Great Chronography* was a civil and not a patriarchal official, he probably came from a family of civil officials.

decurions.[14] Their families had significant landholdings and a certain local prominence, but when men from such families arrived in the capital they had limited access to the bureaucratic ladder, as Michael Attaliates and Nicetas Choniates found.[15] The father of Nicetas the Paphlagonian was a provincial priest, and the father of Eustathius of Thessalonica may have been an ordinary clergyman in Constantinople; in any case, neither of them could count on much help in their careers from their families. The same was probably true of most of the fourteen historians of whose families we know nothing. Such men could rely only on their intelligence and hard work to advance themselves.

Even though most of the middle Byzantine historians lived, worked, and wrote in Constantinople, a number of them were born elsewhere.[16] About twenty-seven of them seem likely to have been born in the capital, but this total may be somewhat too high. It depends on assuming in the absence of other evidence that longtime residents of the capital had been born there; and though most of them probably had been, a few of them may not have been.[17] Ten historians, however, are known to have come from different parts of Anatolia, though apparently no two of them from the same city or town. Three of these came from the north of Anatolia, four from the west, two from the center, and one from the south.[18] Only two historians seem to have come from the Byzantine Balkans, and two more from Byzantine Italy.[19] The two remaining historians came from formerly Byzantine territory that by their times was under Arab rule: George Syncellus from Syria, and Peter of Alexandria from Egypt.

Given the limited territorial extent of the middle Byzantine empire, this geographical distribution is reasonably wide. It reflects, however, the fact that the middle Byzantine Balkans were something of a cultural backwater. The only Balkan historians were Arethas, from Patras, and Michael Glycas, from Corcyra,

[14] Leo the Deacon, Michael Attaliates, John Scylitzes, George Cedrenus, and Nicetas Choniates.

[15] See above, pp. 312–13 (Attaliates) and 272–73 (Nicetas Choniates). Another example may be Michael Psellus' father; see p. 423 above.

[16] See the map of the historians' birthplaces and workplaces on pp. 488–89 below.

[17] These are Trajan(?), Tarasius(?), the author of the *Great Chronography*(?), Nicephorus, Theophanes, Sergius Confessor, Photius, the ninth-century author of the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829 and its further Continuation from 829 to 844(?), George the Monk(?), the author of the History of Basil and Leo(?), Theodore Daphnopates(?), Genesius, Constantine VII, Manuel the Protospatharius, Symeon the Logothete, Pseudo-Symeon(?), Theodore of Side(?), Theodore of Sebastea(?), the author of the "Chronicle of Brussels"(?), Demetrius of Cyzicus(?), Psellus, Nicephorus Bryennius, Anna Comnena, John Zonaras, Constantine Manasses, John Cinnamus, and Eustathius.

[18] North: Ignatius the Deacon (Amastris?), Nicetas the Paphlagonian (Heraclea Pontica?), John Xiphilinus the Younger (Trebizond); west: Leo the Deacon (Caloë), John the Monk (Lydia), John Scylitzes (the Thracesian Theme), Nicetas Choniates (Chonae); center: Nicephorus the Deacon (Phrygia), George Cedrenus (Cedrus); south: Michael Attaliates (Attalia).

[19] Balkans: Arethas (Patras), Michael Glycas (Corcyra); Italy: Theognostus (Sicily?), the author of the "Chronicle of Cambridge" (Calabria?).

neither of whom was primarily an historian. Anatolia, however, produced several important historians: Leo the Deacon, Michael Attaliates, John Scylitzes, and Nicetas Choniates, to whom we may add Nicetas the Paphlagonian. Practically all the historians appear to have studied in Constantinople except for George Syncellus, who was educated in Syria, Peter of Alexandria, who was probably educated in Alexandria, and the minimally educated Italian author of the "Chronicle of Cambridge," the only historian who seems never to have visited the capital. Constantinople's dominance of advanced secondary education and higher education in the middle period is in any case well established.

The numbers of historians from Anatolia and the Balkans are actually rather similar in both the early and middle Byzantine periods. The same number of historians, ten, came from Anatolia (including Isauria and Cilicia) in the early period. The number of historians who came from the Balkans in the early period (four), though higher than in the middle period (two), shows that the region had not been a major producer of historians even before the Avars and Slavs overran it in the early seventh century. Twenty-two of the early Byzantine historians were natives of Syria or Egypt, which were no longer Byzantine during most of the middle Byzantine period, though they still produced George Syncellus and Peter of Alexandria, who immigrated to the empire. The empire's loss of Syria, the homeland of seventeen early Byzantine historians, might well have been expected to reduce the number of middle Byzantine historians, though Syrian Christians continued to write histories in Syriac and Arabic between the seventh and the thirteenth centuries. The loss of Syria and Egypt, however, was largely balanced by a great increase in the number of historians born in Constantinople, which rose from nine in the early period to perhaps twenty-seven in the middle period.[20]

Most middle Byzantine historians wrote in Constantinople, but the eight known exceptions are noteworthy. Five wrote their histories not very far from the capital. Theophanes finished George Syncellus' work in the Bithynian monastery of Megas Agros, of which he was the abbot. Sergius Confessor wrote his history in exile, possibly in a monastery on one of the Princes' Isles in the Sea of Marmara.[21] John Zonaras compiled his history in retirement in a monastery on the island of St. Glyceria, also a short sail from Constantinople across the Sea of Marmara. Each of these three seems to have consulted not only his own books and those of his monastery but books sent by his friends from the capital. Nicetas the Paphlagonian evidently wrote his history in monastic retirement in Heraclea Pontica, using his own books and whatever his friends and students sent him. After Nicetas Choniates composed the first version of his history in

[20] Here, besides the historians discussed in Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 353 and n. 7 (and mapped there on pp. 380–81), we should include the additional historians mentioned on p. 457 n. 1 above: Eusebius of Emesa, Euzoïus of Antioch, and Irenaeus of Tyre from Syria; Andronicus, probably from Egypt; and the continuer of John of Antioch, probably from Constantinople.

[21] See above, p. 92.

Constantinople, after the Fourth Crusade he prepared later versions in Selymbria, in Thrace, and Nicaea, in Bithynia, relying largely on oral sources. Eustathius wrote his history in Thessalonica, where he was archbishop, but for his work he needed only to consult fellow eyewitnesses of the recent sack of the city and perhaps to check some literary references in his personal library. Theodore of Sebastea apparently wrote in Sebastea, where he was archbishop and found some veterans of Basil II's campaigns to interview, but the shortcomings of his history seem to show his difficulties in writing in a provincial town. The author of the "Chronicle of Cambridge" limited himself to events in Sicily and Calabria, where he probably wrote.

Except for the emperor Constantine VII, the Caesar Nicephorus Bryennius, and Nicephorus' wife, Anna, the other forty historians worked for a living. Twenty-two or twenty-three of them seem to have served as civil officials at some point in their careers.[22] They made up a majority not just of the historians but of the more important historians, and most of them held high offices. Nicetas Choniates and probably Michael Psellus were for a time the leading ministers in the government, exercising sweeping powers under ineffectual emperors. Symeon and Nicetas Choniates served as postal logothete, the Byzantine official most like a prime minister; Nicetas Choniates served as general logothete, the finance minister; and Theodore Daphnopates and Symeon served as military logothete, paymaster of the army and navy. The office of protoasecretis, head of the imperial chancery and a particularly suitable position for a literary man, seems to have been held by seven historians: the future patriarchs Tarasius, Nicephorus, and Photius, and Theodore Daphnopates, Symeon the Logothete, Psellus, and John Zonaras. Joseph Genesius held the prestigious sinecure of chartulary of the inkwell. Three historians were imperial secretaries, who often attended the emperor in person.[23] Seven historians were judges, including three who reached the leading judicial posts of city prefect and drungary of the Watch.[24] Theophanes was apparently the only historian who had served as a military officer, unless we count the Caesar Nicephorus Bryennius, who served as a general.

Twenty-two historians held various positions in the Church. Tarasius, Nicephorus, and Photius became patriarchs of Constantinople, but all of them only after they wrote their historical works. Two historians served as a syncellus

[22] These were Trajan, Tarasius(?), the author of the *Great Chronography* (who may, however, have been a patriarchal official rather than a civil official), Nicephorus, Sergius Confessor(?), Photius, the ninth-century author of the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829 and its further Continuation from 829 to 844(?), the author of the History of Basil and Leo, Theodore Daphnopates(?), Genesius, Manuel the Protospatharius, Symeon the Logothete, Pseudo-Symeon, John the Monk(?), Psellus, John Xiphilinus the Younger, Michael Attaliates, John Scylitzes, George Cedrenus, John Zonaras, Michael Glycas, John Cinnamus, and Nicetas Choniates.

[23] Michael Glycas, John Cinnamus, and Nicetas Choniates.

[24] City prefects: Theodore Daphnopates(?), John Scylitzes. Drungaries of the Watch: John Scylitzes again, John Zonaras. Other judges: Manuel the Protospatharius, Michael Psellus, Michael Attaliates, Nicetas Choniates.

to the patriarch, and two or three were patriarchal officials of some sort.[25] Apart from the patriarchs, eight historians became bishops, all of them metropolitans, though one served as a suffragan bishop before being promoted to metropolitan.[26] No historian is known to have been a simple priest, but five were deacons.[27] Eleven historians seem to have been monks, some after retiring from the bureaucracy.[28] Seven historians were professional teachers, among whom Psellus held a professorial chair, three others taught in the Patriarchal School, and three more taught in schools of their own.[29] Only two historians are known to have practiced as lawyers, both of whom were soon promoted to judge.[30] Constantine Manasses was a more or less professional poet. Peter of Alexandria's profession is unknown. No historians seem to have been physicians, merchants, or agricultural magnates, unless we count Nicephorus Bryennius in the last category.

By comparison, the early Byzantine historians included about half as many civil officials (eleven). In each period only one historian was a military officer, but three of the early historians were military secretaries, a profession that seems to have lapsed in middle Byzantine times. In comparison with the middle period, the earlier historians included fewer bishops (three), fewer minor clerics (one), and fewer monks (four), but several priests (five). The early historians included about as many professional teachers (six), but all of these were professors, a position that was much rarer in the middle period, when a higher education was only intermittently available. The early historians also included many more lawyers (eleven), a profession that seems to have declined in the middle period, but no judges, a profession that seems to have gained importance in the middle period. In each period we find one historian who was mainly a poet.[31] The rarity of military men among middle Byzantine historians contrasts with the earlier importance of the military officer Ammianus and the military secretary Procopius, probably the greatest historians of their times and much finer military historians than anyone in the middle period. During both periods most historians worked for the government.

We should hardly be surprised that, to an even greater extent than early Byzantine historians, middle Byzantine historians tended to live and work in Constantinople. In both periods most historians worked in the civil administration,

[25] Syncelli: George Syncellus, Demetrius of Cyzicus. Patriarchal officials: the author of the *Great Chronography* (who was perhaps a civil official rather than a patriarchal official), Ignatius the Deacon, Eustathius of Thessalonica.

[26] Ignatius the Deacon (Nicaea), Arethas (Caesarea), Leo the Deacon (Caria?), Theodore of Side, Theodore of Sebastea, Demetrius of Cyzicus, Constantine Manasses (Panium [suffragan bishop] and Naupactus), and Eustathius of Thessalonica.

[27] Ignatius the Deacon, Arethas, Nicephorus the Deacon, Leo the Deacon, and Eustathius.

[28] George Syncellus, Theophanes, Ignatius the Deacon, George the Monk, Nicetas the Paphlagonian, John the Monk, the author of the "Chronicle of Cambridge"(?), the author of the "Chronicle of Brussels"(?), Psellus, John Xiphilinus the Younger(?), and John Zonaras.

[29] Professor: Psellus. Teachers in the Patriarchal School: Ignatius the Deacon, George the Monk, Eustathius of Thessalonica. Other teachers: Theognostus, Arethas, Nicetas the Paphlagonian.

[30] Michael Attaliates and John Scylitzes.

[31] See Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 355–56 and n. 17.

the patriarchate, or the schools, all of which were centered in the capital. The imperial archives, which some historians used sporadically, were also there. Most historians needed books, and after the seventh century Constantinople was the only Byzantine city with important libraries, including the imperial library and some monastic libraries. The city must also have been much the best place to buy used books or to have them copied to order, though our evidence for the book trade is exiguous.[32] Even if the Constantinopolitan bookshops known to have existed in the sixth century disappeared during the seventh century, the capital must still have had the empire's largest number of professional copyists and its largest public, monastic, and private libraries.[33] Photius, an exceptionally wealthy and zealous bibliophile, seems to have owned more than a hundred and fifty books and to have read well over four hundred, something that would have been practically impossible anywhere else in the Greek-speaking world.[34] In the works of Ignatius the Deacon, Photius, the circle of Constantine VII, Psellus, Anna Comnena, and others we can glimpse an intellectual community that read and discussed literature.[35] No other place in the empire had anything comparable.

Although we can seldom establish the exact chronology of the historians' lives, we know or can guess the dates when thirty-seven of the historians were born and when they completed their histories. While most of these dates are conjectural and approximate, an average of all of them should be more reliable than the individual dates, and indicates that on average the historians finished their first histories when they were about forty-nine, and their last histories (often the same as their first), when they were about fifty-three. We may be encouraged to note that the comparable averages for the early Byzantine historians are forty-seven and fifty-four, a result that suggests not just that the averages are fairly accurate but that the ages when historians typically wrote did not change significantly between the two periods.[36] We also have evidence for how long sixteen of the middle Byzantine historians lived: an average of sixty-one years. Not surprisingly, six of them left histories that were at least partly unfinished at their deaths.[37] Although about half a dozen of the historians seem to have written when they

[32] Cf. Wilson, "Books," especially pp. 1 ("A skeptic might well say that there is no evidence about the book trade, or even that there was no such thing. The skeptic is probably right in his belief. …") and 4 ("Until more evidence is found it may be best to assume that the trade in books was almost always in the form of secondhand transactions and special commissions given to professional scribes. …"). See also Reynolds and Wilson, *Scribes*, pp. 54–63.

[33] On sixth-century booksellers, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 354–55. On libraries in Constantinople and the provinces, see Wilson, "Libraries."

[34] See Treadgold, *Nature*, especially pp. 5 (Photius read c. 389 books for the *Bibliotheca*), 32–34 (Photius refers in his letters and *Amphilochia* to c. 42 books not in the *Bibliotheca* as if he had read them), and 93 (Photius owned "a minimum of about 150 volumes, many containing several works bound together").

[35] See above, pp. 101–6 (Ignatius), 106–9 (Photius), 223–24 (researchers for Constantine VII), 271–81 (Psellus), and 354–58 (Anna).

[36] Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 357.

[37] George Syncellus, Sergius Confessor, Leo the Deacon, Nicephorus Bryennius, Anna Comnena, and Nicetas Choniates.

were in their twenties or thirties, most of them wrote in middle age, when they were old enough to have significant experience of life and politics but young enough to be vigorous and quite possibly ambitious.[38]

Like early Byzantine historians, middle Byzantine historians seldom mention themselves or their families in their histories. We know somewhat more about the private lives of the historians of the middle period only because some of them were more prominent people and are therefore attested in other sources.[39] We have saints' lives of the patriarchs Tarasius and Nicephorus and of Theophanes Confessor, and shorter hagiographical notices on Sergius Confessor and Nicetas the Paphlagonian. Eight of the other historians were also historical figures important enough to be described by their contemporaries, including some other historians.[40] Psellus, Michael Attaliates, and Nicetas Choniates mention themselves and their families in writings other than their histories. Psellus, Anna, and Choniates refer to themselves in their histories as historical figures, and Leo the Deacon names his father in his preface, imitating his model Agathias.[41] Joseph Genesius praises his grandfather Constantine Maniaces, though without mentioning that he was a relative.[42] Michael Glycas addresses his history to his son without naming him, and Nicetas Choniates refers to his wife and children without naming any of them.[43]

As in the early Byzantine period, the historians in the middle period seem not to have avoided referring to their families primarily out of indifference. The tradition that historians should seldom write about their private lives went back to Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon, and had been confirmed in the early Byzantine period, when most historians were not particularly proud of their relatively obscure provincial families. We know that Psellus, Bryennius, and Anna were actually quite proud of their parents and their children, and some other historians probably felt pride in their families as well; but as a rule such personal matters were considered inappropriate to include in a history. John Scylitzes (or his source Nicephorus the Deacon) seems to have criticized Joseph Genesius for using his history to exaggerate the importance of his grandfather.[44] Moreover, at least eighteen of our historians seem to have had no wife or child to mention, because they never married.[45] At a time when even most priests were married, this seems

[38] The younger historians were apparently Tarasius(?), Nicephorus, Peter of Alexandria, John Xiphilinus the Younger, Constantine Manasses, and John Cinnamus.

[39] On this reticence of the earlier historians, see Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 358–60.

[40] Photius, Constantine VII, Symeon the Logothete, Psellus, Nicephorus Bryennius, Anna Comnena, and Nicetas Choniates.

[41] See p. 240 and n. 62 above on Leo.

[42] See pp. 186–87 above.

[43] See above, pp. 406 (Glycas) and 424 and 427 (Nicetas Choniates).

[44] See above, pp. 176–77 and 234–35.

[45] Tarasius(?), George Syncellus, Nicephorus, Ignatius the Deacon, Photius, George the Monk, Arethas, Nicetas the Paphlagonian, Symeon the Logothete, Leo the Deacon(?), Theodore of Side, the author of the "Chronicle of Cambridge," Theodore of Sebastea, the

a large number, and may mean that many of the historians avoided marriage to be eligible to become bishops, as eight of them eventually did.

In the early period, most historians seem to have written not so much to advance their careers as to set the record straight by criticizing the political and religious policies of contemporary emperors.[46] Quite a few middle Byzantine historians also criticized contemporary emperors. The exiled Sergius Confessor and the retired Nicetas the Paphlagonian boldly denounced their contemporaries, and their discomfiting candor may be one reason for their histories' failure to survive. Nicetas Choniates is only a little less outspoken in his criticisms of all the emperors during his lifetime. The iconophile historians who wrote soon after the two restorations of the icons strongly condemned the iconoclast emperors—but by then such condemnations were safe enough.[47] Trajan the Patrician denounced Justinian II; Theophanes (probably copying George Syncellus) denounced Nicephorus I; Nicephorus the Deacon apparently denounced the emperors before John I; and John the Monk apparently denounced the emperors before Isaac I. In each of these cases, the emperors being attacked had died, and the reigning emperor would probably not have found attacks on them objectionable. Psellus and Attaliates criticize practically all the emperors they discuss except for the current emperors, whom they praise. The author of the lost History of Basil and Leo criticized Basil I and Leo VI, but evidently wrote after they were dead.

With the notable exceptions of Sergius Confessor and Nicetas the Paphlagonian, who were dissenters as bitter as any early Byzantine historian had been, most middle Byzantine historians were members of the Byzantine establishment and tempered their criticisms of it accordingly. Besides Constantine VII, who was the emperor himself, eight historians seem to have been commissioned by the emperor to write their histories, and two more were commissioned by a member of the imperial family.[48] Fifteen of the historians seem to have succeeded in bettering themselves by writing their histories, and Joseph Genesius seems to have failed to do so only because Constantine VII found his history unsatisfactory.[49] Historians like Psellus, Michael Attaliates, and Nicetas Choniates, who obviously had serious reservations about most of the emperors they described, expressed

author of the "Chronicle of Brussels," Demetrius of Cyzicus, John the Monk, Constantine Manasses, and Eustathius of Thessalonica.

[46] Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 357–58, 360–61, and 366–67.

[47] These were Tarasius(?), the patriarch Nicephorus, the author of the *Great Chronography*, Theophanes, the ninth-century author of the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829 and its further Continuation from 829 to 844, and George the Monk.

[48] Tarasius(?) (by Irene and Constantine VI), Theodore Daphnopates(?) (by Constantine VII), Genesius (by Constantine VII), Manuel the Protospatharius (by Romanus II?), Symeon the Logothete (by Nicephorus II?), Pseudo-Symeon (by Basil II?), Psellus (by Constantine X), Bryennius (by Irene Ducaena), Constantine Manasses (by the sebastocratorissa Irene), and John Cinnamus (by Manuel I?).

[49] Those who appear to have succeeded were Trajan, Tarasius(?), the patriarch Nicephorus, George Syncellus, Photius, George the Monk, Theodore Daphnopates(?), Symeon the Logothete, Leo the Deacon, Theodore of Side, Theodore of Sebastea, John Xiphilinus the Younger, Michael Attaliates, John Scylitzes, and Constantine Manasses.

their disapproval in reasonably balanced terms. Even Anna Comnena wrote more to praise her father, Alexius I, than to blame her detested brother John II. At first Psellus and Attaliates failed to praise the reigning emperor enough to do themselves much good; but in their second editions they decided to praise a new emperor with less restraint.

Most middle Byzantine historians seem to have tried to describe their empire and most of their rulers more or less accurately. Only a small minority of their descriptions of emperors are mere panegyrics, like those of Constantine VII's writers on Basil I, Psellus on Michael VII, Attaliates on Nicephorus III, or Cinnamus on Manuel I. Anna's praise for her dead father is obviously sincere. Most historians stopped writing before the current emperor's reign, presumably because they wanted neither to include criticisms that might harm their careers nor to write compliments that nobody would take seriously. (Encomiastic orations of the reigning emperor were of course a separate genre, taken seriously for their literary qualities but not for their opinions.) Only Nicephorus III rewarded a history that praised himself, and then only when Attaliates offered it to him. Constantine VII did want to see his supposed grandfather Basil I treated favorably in good histories, but he gave no reward to Genesius for favoring Basil in an inferior history. Since most emperors thought that histories should be distinct from panegyrics, they rewarded historians for contributing to literature and scholarship, not for producing imperial propaganda.[50] Even the historians who won no material rewards for their efforts must have hoped that their contemporaries and posterity would give them credit for writing impartial, useful, and elegant histories.

The histories

In contrast with early Byzantine histories, the majority of middle Byzantine histories have reached us more or less intact. We have essentially complete texts of only sixteen out of fifty-nine histories known to have been written in the early period, or about a quarter; but we have practically all of twenty-nine out of forty-eight histories written in the middle period, or about three-fifths.[51] Although we have only fragments of some middle Byzantine histories, we probably have most of the information that was in them, either because we have substantial summaries of their contents or because we have most of their sources. For example, we seem to have most of the sources of the missing parts of the histories of Theognostus

[50] This seems to have been the case with Trajan, Tarasius(?), the patriarch Nicephorus, George Syncellus, Photius, George the Monk, Symeon the Logothete, Leo the Deacon, Theodore of Side, Theodore of Sebastea, John Xiphilinus the Younger, and John Scylitzes. Theodore Daphnopates and Nicephorus the Deacon, if they wrote the works that I have attributed to them, are partial exceptions, though even they praised Basil I and John I largely by criticizing those emperors' predecessors.

[51] Cf. the table on pp. 490–92 below, with the table in Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 382–84, to which we should add the five lost histories mentioned in p. 457 n. 1 above.

the Grammarian, Nicetas the Paphlagonian, Manuel the Protospatharius, and Theodore of Side, and most of the remainder of their contents is summarized in surviving histories by Genesius, the author of *Theophanes Continuatus*, Symeon the Logothete, Pseudo-Symeon, and others.[52] In all, we probably have more than half of nine of the nineteen middle Byzantine histories that have failed to survive in their full original form.[53] Our most serious losses appear to be most of the history of Sergius Confessor for the years from 769 to 828, when another source would be particularly welcome, and the missing sections of Constantine VII's *Historical Excerpts*, which would, however, be sources only for the ancient and early Byzantine periods.

The distribution of histories by types was somewhat different in middle Byzantine times from what it had been in the early Byzantine age. In each of the two periods, a little more than half the histories were narratives dealing with the century or two before the author wrote.[54] The most obvious difference was that early Byzantines wrote nineteen church histories, while middle Byzantines wrote none at all of that formerly popular genre.[55] World histories made up over a quarter of the total in the middle period, but only about a seventh of the total in the early period.[56] The remaining histories were a varied lot that may be classified in different ways. In both early and middle Byzantine times five histories were written on the general period of the Roman empire, sometimes extending

[52] See above, pp. 79–90 (on Theognostus), 146–51 (on Nicetas), 197–203 (on Manuel), and 247–52 (on Theodore of Side).

[53] Trajan(?), George Syncellus (his version of Theophilus of Edessa), Ignatius' Hesychius Epitome, the ninth-century Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes first to 829 and then its further Continuation from 829 to 844, Nicephorus the Deacon(?), Theodore of Sebastea, John the Monk, and John Cinnamus.

[54] Middle period (25 of 48 histories): Trajan, Tarasius(?), Nicephorus (*History*), Sergius Confessor, Theognostus(?), the Continuation of Theophanes from 829 to 844, the History of Basil and Leo, Arethas, Theodore Daphnopates(?) (*Theophanes Continuatus*), Genesius, Manuel the Protospatharius, Nicephorus the Deacon(?), Leo the Deacon, Theodore of Side, the "Chronicle of Cambridge," Theodore of Sebastea, Demetrius of Cyzicus, John the Monk, Psellus (*Chronography*), Michael Attaliates, John Scylitzes, Nicephorus Bryennius, Anna Comnena, John Cinnamus, Nicetas Choniates. Early period (32 of 59 histories): Eusebius of Emesa, Euzoïus of Antioch, Irenaeus of Tyre, the continuation of John of Antioch, Heliconius, Ammianus, Gelasius of Caesarea, Eunapius, Philip of Side, Philostorgius, Socrates, Sozomen (*History*), Theodoret, Priscus, Malchus (2 histories), Candidus, Zacharias of Mytilene, John Diacrinomenus, Theodore the Lector (2 histories), Marcellinus, Basil the Cilician, Procopius (2 histories), Theophanes of Byzantium (2 histories), Agathias, Menander Protector, Evagrius, John of Epiphania, Theophylact.

[55] To the sixteen church histories listed in Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, p. 363 and n. 42, add those of Eusebius of Emesa, Euzoïus of Antioch, and Irenaeus of Tyre. (See p. 457 n. 1 above.)

[56] Middle period (13 of 48 histories): Nicephorus (*Chronography*), the *Great Chronography*(?), George Syncellus (2 histories), George the Monk, Peter of Alexandria, Nicetas the Paphlagonian, Symeon the Logothete, Pseudo-Symeon, George Cedrenus, John Zonaras, Constantine Manasses, Michael Glycas. Early period (8 of 59 histories): Andronicus, Eusebius of Caesarea (*Chronicle*), Panodorus, Annianus, Eustathius of Epiphania, John Malalas, John of Antioch, the "Paschal Chronicle."

back to the Roman Republic and the Roman kings.[57] In the middle period the category that may be called history of literature is represented by the *Bibliotheca* of Photius and Ignatius the Deacon's Hesychius Epitome, of which the latter summarized Hesychius of Miletus' *Name-Finder*, the only similar history of literature in the early Byzantine period. The middle Byzantine histories include just one biography, *The Life of Basil*, though six early Byzantine histories were primarily biographical.[58] Just one middle Byzantine history, Eustathius' account of the sack of Thessalonica, can be put into the miscellaneous category of monographs, a type represented by four early Byzantine histories, two of them on the workings of the bureaucracy.[59] Three early Byzantine histories were reports on embassies, a semiliterary genre not found in the middle period.[60] On the other hand, Constantine VII's semiliterary *Historical Excerpts* is like nothing that we know from early Byzantine times.

In general, however, the subjects of histories in both periods were more similar to each other than different. In both periods most historians wanted to record their own times in the context of earlier events, and many historians were interested in the more distant past. Although church history as such ceased to be written after Evagrius Scholasticus, in the late sixth century, the main reason seems to be that the affairs of Church and state had become so closely intertwined that historians found it natural to treat them both together. In fact, middle Byzantine historians gave a good deal of attention to church history, especially George Syncellus, Theophanes, George the Monk, and Michael Glycas, and apparently Tarasius and Nicetas the Paphlagonian in their lost works. Middle Byzantine historians also showed so much interest in the emperors' lives that most of their histories resemble a series of imperial biographies, although only the *Life of Basil* is formally biographical. While the Byzantines have left us no reports from ambassadors during the middle period, Byzantines of the middle period remained interested in embassies, as we can see from the surviving excerpts on embassies in Constantine's *Historical Excerpts*. The bureaucracy is also a subject that features prominently in the histories of Psellus, Michael Attaliates, Nicetas Choniates, and others. Since middle Byzantine historians often mention church history, biographical details, diplomacy, and the bureaucracy, the lack or paucity of histories exclusively devoted to those topics represents a change from the earlier period more in form than in content.

[57] Middle period (5 of 48 histories): Theophanes, the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829, the "Chronicle of Brussels," Psellus (*History*), John Xiphilinus the Younger. Early period (5 of 59 histories): Eusebius of Caesarea (*History*), Sozomen (Epitome), Zosimus, Peter the Patrician (History), Hesychius (*History*).

[58] Middle period (1 of 48 histories): Theodore Daphnopates(?) (*Life of Basil*). Early period (6 of 59 histories): Eusebius of Caesarea (*Martyrs*, *Life of Constantine*), Praxagoras (3 histories), Bemarchius.

[59] Middle period: Eustathius (assuming that Caminiates' account is a forgery). Early period: Gelasius of Cyzicus, John the Lydian (2 histories), Peter the Patrician (*On Administrative Organization*).

[60] Olympiodorus, Nonnosus, Peter the Patrician (Report).

A rather different pattern emerges if we distinguish histories that were primarily derivative from those that were primarily original—that is, works of scholarship compiled from other histories as opposed to contemporary histories composed from the experience of the author and his acquaintances and perhaps also from recent documents. These categories overlapped somewhat, because historians often concluded derivative histories of earlier times by adding their own supplements on contemporary history to bring their works up to date. Yet all histories of this sort were primarily derivative, with the exception of the early Byzantine history in Latin by Ammianus, which was primarily original and contemporary even though it had an initial derivative section that is now mostly lost to us.[61] During the early period, about three-fifths of the histories were primarily original (thirty-four out of fifty-nine), and the overwhelming majority had original material if we include supplements at the end (seventeen more).[62] During the middle period, however, only about a third of the histories were primarily original (seventeen out of forty-eight), and about two-thirds had original material if we include supplements at the end (sixteen more).[63] In other words, about two-thirds of the middle Byzantine histories, but only about two-fifths of the early Byzantine histories, were chiefly derivative. In comparison with early Byzantine historians, middle Byzantine historians seem to have been less interested in their own times and more interested in earlier history.

[61] See Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 60–63, and for further material from Ammianus' lost books, see pp. 394–96 above.

[62] Primarily original: Eusebius of Emesa, Euzoïus of Antioch, Irenaeus of Tyre, the continuer of John of Antioch, Eusebius of Caesarea (*Martyrs*, *Life of Constantine*), Praxagoras (*History of Constantine*), Bemarchius, Ammianus, Gelasius of Caesarea, Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Philostorgius, Socrates, Sozomen (History), Theodoret, Priscus, Malchus (*Byzantine History*), Candidus, Zacharias of Mytilene, John Diacrinomenus, Theodore the Lector (*History of the Church*), Basil the Cilician, Nonnosus, John the Lydian (History), Peter the Patrician (Report), Procopius (2 histories), Theophanes of Byzantium (2 histories), Agathias, Menander, John of Epiphania, Theophylact. Primarily derivative but with original supplements: Andronicus, Eusebius of Caesarea (*Chronicle*, *History*), Heliconius, Panodorus, Annianus, Philip of Side, Marcellinus, Eustathius of Epiphania, Malalas, John the Lydian (*On Magistracies*), Peter the Patrician (*On Administrative Organization*), Hesychius (both histories), Evagrius, John of Antioch, the "Paschal Chronicle." Derivative, without original supplements: Praxagoras (*Kings of Athens*, *Alexander*), Sozomen (Epitome), Gelasius of Cyzicus, Malchus (History from Constantine), Zosimus, Theodore the Lector (*Tripartite History*), Peter the Patrician (History).

[63] Primarily original: Trajan, Tarasius(?), Sergius Confessor, the Continuation of Theophanes from 829 to 844, the History of Basil and Leo, Nicephorus the Deacon(?), Leo the Deacon, Theodore of Sebastea, Demetrius of Cyzicus, John the Monk, Psellus (*Chronography*), Attaliates, Bryennius, Anna Comnena, Cinnamus, Eustathius of Thessalonica, Nicetas Choniates. Primarily derivative but with original supplements: George Syncellus (translation of Theophilus), *Great Chronography*, Nicephorus (*Concise Chronography*), Theophanes (actually by George Syncellus), Theognostus, Ignatius, Photius, Peter of Alexandria, Arethas(?), Nicetas the Paphlagonian, Manuel, Symeon the Logothete, Theodore of Side, the "Chronicle of Cambridge," the "Chronicle of Brussels," Zonaras. Derivative, without original supplements: George Syncellus (*Selection*), Nicephorus (*History*), the Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829, George the Monk, Theodore Daphnopates(?) (*Life of Basil*, *Theophanes Continuatus*), Genesius, Constantine VII, Pseudo-Symeon, Psellus (*History*), Xiphilinus, Scylitzes, Cedrenus, Manasses, Glycas.

Taken as a whole, middle Byzantine histories also differ from early Byzantine histories in their Greek style. While about half the early Byzantine histories in Greek were written in an imitation of the classical Attic dialect, almost as many were written in standard literary Greek (*Koinē*) or an attempt at it.[64] Of the middle Byzantine historians, however, the great majority tried to write Atticizing Greek, and only about a sixth seem to have tried to write standard literary Greek. The roster of the seven who wrote standard literary Greek is instructive. George Syncellus, Theophanes, and Peter of Alexandria wrote in the tradition of Eusebius of Caesarea and the Alexandrian chroniclers, who had used standard literary Greek. George the Monk and the author of the *Great Chronography* wrote in the tradition of the Church Fathers and church historians, most of whom had also used standard literary Greek. The "Chronicle of Cambridge," written far from Constantinople, is scarcely a literary work at all. Although Sergius Confessor must have died before he could finish his history, if he had been able to revise it he would probably have tried to put it into Atticizing Greek, since he was apparently continuing the Atticizing *Concise History* of Nicephorus.[65] Note that none of these histories but the "Chronicle of Cambridge" is significantly later than the ninth century. Admittedly, the distinction between Atticizing and standard literary Greek can be ambiguous in practice, not least because middle Byzantines included among their models for Attic Greek several of the classicizing Church Fathers.[66] Nevertheless, the general tendency for middle Byzantine historians to write Atticizing Greek is clear.

Most authors even of relatively unpretentious middle Byzantine histories at least attempted to use the Atticizing form of the language. Since Nicetas the Paphlagonian, the author of the "Chronicle of Brussels," and Michael Glycas seem not to have tried very hard, their language is not very far from standard literary Greek.[67] Most of the rest, however, made more serious attempts at Atticizing, and

[64] The following list omits Ammianus Marcellinus and Count Marcellinus, who both wrote in Latin. Attic Greek (29 of 57 histories): Bemarchius, Heliconius, Eunapius, Philostorgius, Sozomen (2 histories), Theodoret, Priscus, Malchus (2 histories), Candidus, Theodore the Lector (2 histories), Eustathius of Epiphania, John the Lydian (2 histories), Peter the Patrician (*History*, *On Administrative Organization*), Procopius (2 histories), Hesychius (2 histories), Theophanes of Byzantium (2 histories), Agathias, Menander, Evagrius, John of Epiphania, Theophylact. Standard literary Greek (24 histories): Eusebius of Emesa, Euzoïus of Antioch, Irenaeus of Tyre, Andronicus, continuation of John of Antioch, Eusebius (4 histories), Gelasius of Caesarea, Panodorus, Annianus, Philip of Side, Olympiodorus, Socrates, Gelasius of Cyzicus, Zacharias of Mytilene, Zosimus, John Diacrinomenus, Basil the Cilician, Nonnosus, Peter the Patrician (Report), John of Antioch, the "Paschal Chronicle." Apparently unsuccessful attempt to write standard literary Greek (1 history): Malalas. Ionic Greek (3 histories): Praxagoras (3 histories).

[65] On Sergius' style, see above, pp. 93–97.

[66] See Browning, "Language," especially pp. 107–8 (on the classicizing Church Fathers of the late fourth and early fifth centuries) and 119 (noting that the "classical models" of Psellus, Anna Comnena, Nicetas Choniates, and others "ranged from Homer to the Fathers of the Church").

[67] See above, pp. 150–51 (Nicetas), 268 ("Chronicle of Brussels"), and 407 (Glycas).

Michael Psellus and Nicetas Choniates succeeded as well as the best-educated Hellenistic and early Byzantine authors in imitating the language of Thucydides and Xenophon. The pervasive Atticizing in all sorts of middle Byzantine history shows that the tradition of classicizing secular history had absorbed the early Byzantine tradition of ecclesiastical history, not the other way around. Even the first of the middle Byzantine historians, Trajan the Patrician, seems to have composed in Atticizing Greek, and then to have been emulated by Tarasius and Nicephorus, even though writing Atticizing Greek well must have been difficult at a time when the schools seem not to have taught it well. We can see Nicephorus struggling with Attic in the two drafts of his *Concise History*, while the text of the *Scriptor Incertus*, probably by Sergius, shows that even an educated aristocrat might use much less classical language to compose a rough draft.[68]

In the eighth and early ninth century Byzantine historians were painfully aware of the recent decline in their system of education, which both Nicephorus and Theophanes deplore, probably echoing Trajan and Tarasius before them.[69] The historians tried to demonstrate that at least they were not themselves affected by the general decline, which Trajan blamed on his enemy Justinian II and Tarasius and Theophanes blamed on the iconoclasts. The idea that Iconoclasm was linked with ignorance took hold among iconophiles, and after 815 iconoclasts tried to refute it through their own scholarly efforts.[70] By the early ninth century, scholarship had regained its prestige among both iconophiles and iconoclasts, and Theognostus the Grammarian, Ignatius the Deacon, and Photius all prided themselves on their learning. One of the most obvious ways to display one's classical education was naturally to write Atticizing Greek, or at least to use Atticizing trappings like the optative mood and the dual number and classicisms like "Byzantium" for Constantinople and "Scythians" for Slavs. Photius, Symeon the Logothete, and Psellus were leading exponents of classicizing middle Byzantine Greek.[71] The same antiquarian tendency that led middle Byzantine historians to try to write in Attic evidently lay behind their greater interest in recording the history of much earlier times.

While in general middle Byzantine historians tried to imitate classical models, not all of them followed the classical practice of dividing histories into books, which had also been a feature of church histories. Only fourteen middle Byzantine writers are known to have used book divisions in their histories, including Michael Glycas and Nicetas Choniates, who called their divisions "parts."[72]

[68] See above, pp. 28–30 (Nicephorus) and 93–97 (Sergius).

[69] Nicephorus, *Concise History* 52, and Theophanes A.M. 6218 (405.10–14).

[70] See Mango, "Availability," especially pp. 29–35 and 43–45, and Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, pp. 63–65, 125, 192–93, 207–13, 261, and 373–78.

[71] See Browning, "Language," especially pp. 116–17 (on Photius' "program, however naively expressed, of restoration of the classicizing Hochsprache in all its Atticising purity and rejection of Hellenistic Koine or any other intermediate register"), 118–19 (on Symeon the Logothete), and 119–20 (on Psellus and his praise for Symeon the Logothete).

[72] The author of the *Great Chronography*, Nicetas the Paphlagonian, Theodore Daphnopates(?), Genesius, Manuel the Protospatharius, Leo the Deacon, Theodore of Side(?),

Admittedly, in the earlier period short histories had often been presented as single books, and eight middle Byzantine histories could fall into that category.[73] A few of the lost histories may also have been divided into books without our knowing about it.[74] Moreover, some anomalous histories like Theophanes' *Chronography*, Photius' *Bibliotheca*, Ignatius' Hesychius Epitome, and Constantine VII's *Historical Excerpts* had their own divisions, which took the place of books.[75] Yet George Syncellus, George the Monk, Symeon the Logothete, Pseudo-Symeon, Attaliates, Scylitzes, Cedrenus, and Manasses all wrote long histories without using any divisions. Inconveniently for us, John Xiphilinus even epitomized the numbered books of Cassius Dio without labeling Dio's books or indicating where they began or ended, and the *Historical Excerpts* often omit book divisions as well. Even after the disappearance of the papyrus rolls that had originally been numbered as books, book divisions could still be useful for purposes of reference—for example, "as we have said in Book II," or "as we shall mention in Book VII." Most middle Byzantine historians, however, seem not to have thought of this, adding book divisions only as a classicizing affectation.

Although the middle Byzantine historians who wrote important contemporary histories were a small minority, those whose works survive have much in common. They include the three great names of Michael Psellus, Anna Comnena, and Nicetas Choniates, but also Leo the Deacon, Michael Attaliates, Nicephorus Bryennius, John Cinnamus, and Eustathius of Thessalonica. These eight are the middle Byzantine historians whose literary qualities are most admired today. All of them wrote not just competent Atticizing Greek but histories of the classical type that had been established by Thucydides, their fellow contemporary historian. All but Attaliates and Eustathius divided their histories into books, and Eustathius' work is short enough to be considered a single book. All draw heavily on their own experiences except Bryennius, who had planned to devote most of his history to his lifetime but was interrupted by his death. With the partial exception of Eustathius, all eight historians concern themselves mainly with emperors and their ministers and generals. All these histories attempt and attain a certain classicizing objectivity, except for Psellus on Michael VII, Attaliates on Nicephorus III, and Cinnamus on Manuel I. All, except in occasional digressions and invented speeches, hold their reader's interest with convincing portraits of historical figures. Although perhaps the least inspired of the eight is the earliest, Leo the Deacon, who wrote before Psellus began the series of the liveliest middle Byzantine histories, even Leo's history has its literary merits.

Michael Psellus, Nicephorus Bryennius, Anna Comnena, John Zonaras, Michael Glycas, John Cinnamus, and Nicetas Choniates.

[73] Trajan, Tarasius, Nicephorus, Sergius, the ninth-century author of the Continuation of Theophanes from 829 to 844, Arethas(?), Theodore of Sebastea, Demetrius of Cyzicus, and Eustathius.

[74] Theognostus, the Continuation of Theophanes from 829 to 844, the History of Basil and Leo, Nicephorus the Deacon(?), Theodore of Side, and John the Monk.

[75] One may add Nicephorus' *Concise Chronography*, Peter of Alexandria, and the chronicles of Cambridge and Brussels.

In some respects the nine contemporary histories that are lost to us seem likely to have resembled the eight that survive, though the lost histories seem to have been fairly short, like Eustathius's. The contemporary historians whose work we know only in part were Trajan the Patrician, Tarasius, Sergius Confessor, the authors of the ninth-century Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829, its further Continuation from 829 to 844, and the History of Basil and Leo, Nicephorus the Deacon, Theodore of Sebastea, Demetrius of Cyzicus, and John the Monk. Since all of these wrote before Psellus, we should not expect them to have composed something as sophisticated as his *Chronography*. Yet all of them probably wrote competent classicizing Greek by the standards of their times, except for Sergius, who evidently died before he could polish his style. All nine probably drew on their own experience of contemporary emperors and officials. In the summaries of their histories by Theophanes, Nicephorus, Symeon the Logothete, and Scylitzes we can find enough vivid details and intelligent comments to make us wish we had the original texts. Several of the contemporary supplements to the world histories are also well done, including those of Theophanes (evidently composed by George Syncellus), Symeon the Logothete, and John Zonaras. The summaries that we have of the lost contemporary supplements by Theognostus the Grammarian, Nicetas the Paphlagonian, and Manuel the Protospatharius are also detailed and interesting.

How well the contemporary historians knew the leading historical figures of their day is sometimes hard to judge. Psellus, Attaliates, Anna, and Nicetas Choniates knew the emperors and their ministers quite well, and exploited their knowledge skillfully. Other historians whose work benefited from their acquaintance with the people they described were Tarasius, Theognostus, Sergius Confessor, Symeon the Logothete, Bryennius, Cinnamus, and Eustathius, and to a lesser degree Nicephorus the Deacon, Leo the Deacon, Demetrius of Cyzicus, John the Monk, and Zonaras. The patriarch Nicephorus, Photius, Theodore Daphnopates, Genesius, Constantine VII, and Scylitzes were important people who knew many emperors and officials well but failed to describe them in histories. Theodore of Sebastea, the historian of Basil II, appears to have had at most a distant acquaintance with Basil or anyone close to him; as a result, that important emperor is less familiar to us than many far less consequential emperors, bureaucrats, and generals. What Scylitzes' summary of Theodore of Sebastea tells us about Basil is much less vivid than the short account of him in Psellus' *Chronography*, probably because Psellus related what he had heard from Isaac Comnenus, who really had known Basil.[76]

Some modern scholars have seen middle Byzantine contemporary histories chiefly as exercises in imperial propaganda that use classical language for the unclassical purpose of praising certain emperors and condemning others.[77] Doubtless the authors of Constantine VII's official histories were commissioned to praise Constantine's supposed ancestor Basil I and to denigrate his predecessor

[76] See above, p. 289 and n. 90.

[77] E.g., Jenkins, "Classical Background," and Scott, "Classical Tradition."

and victim Michael III. Of course most iconophile historians were hostile to most iconoclast emperors, and Psellus, Attaliates, and Cinnamus distorted their histories to praise Michael VII, Nicephorus III, and Manuel I. Byzantium was an absolute monarchy, with the corresponding incentives to seek the emperor's favor and to avoid his displeasure. Middle Byzantine historians also shared the common human inclination to put personal enemies in an unfavorable light, as we see when Theophanes (probably copying George Syncellus) describes Nicephorus I, Anna describes her brother John II, or Nicetas Choniates describes Basil Camaterus and Constantine Mesopotamites. Displaying another typically human tendency, Psellus can be found depicting himself in a favorable light.

As a rule, however, obvious propaganda is the exception in middle Byzantine histories, which are often surprisingly objective. We have already seen how seldom most of the historians refer to themselves. Already in the iconophile continuation of Trajan the Patrician, probably composed by Tarasius, we see an unexpected ambivalence about Artavasdus, the iconophile rebel against the iconoclast Constantine V.[78] The part of Theophanes' chronicle probably composed by George Syncellus is remarkably evenhanded in describing most of the emperors and patriarchs of its time.[79] The History of Basil and Leo seems to have had both good and bad things to say about Basil I and Leo VI.[80] Even Constantine VII's official historians praise the justice of Theophilus, a fervent iconoclast and the father of their villain, Michael III. Psellus, Attaliates, and Nicetas Choniates have both good and bad things to say about nearly every emperor in their histories. Whatever personal grudges Choniates nursed, he says nothing worse about Camaterus and Mesopotamites than about Isaac II and Alexius III, who had promoted the historian to the highest offices in their governments, and he makes a persuasive case that all four contributed to the ruin of the empire. Thucydides himself obviously bore a grudge against Cleon and Hyperbolus but still makes a plausible case that they contributed to the ruin of Athens.

Most middle Byzantine contemporary historians seem to have relied chiefly on their own memories and oral sources, not on written records. Anna Comnena tells us that she interviewed old soldiers who had served under her father, and she probably had other oral sources as well.[81] We have good reasons to think that Nicephorus Bryennius and Nicetas Choniates also sought out and gathered information from surviving participants in past events.[82] We find occasional evidence of different historians' using the imperial archives, to which many of them must have had access as high-ranking officials. Anna Comnena, Nicetas Choniates, and the historians identified here as Trajan the Patrician, Tarasius, and Theodore Daphnopates all cited material that seems to have come from the state archives, while George Syncellus appears to have consulted the archives of

[78] See above, pp. 23–24.
[79] See above, pp. 46–48.
[80] See above, pp. 130–32.
[81] See above, pp. 362–63.
[82] See above, pp. 349–51 (Bryennius) and 444–45 (Nicetas Choniates).

the patriarchate of Constantinople.[83] When Tarasius and Theodore Daphnopates wrote their histories they seem actually to have been serving as protoasecretis, the official who kept the state archives. When Psellus wrote his *Chronography*, he may well have remembered from his previous service as protoasecretis the approximate amount of the reserve in the treasury when Basil II died.[84] With the possible exception of Tarasius, however, no historian did systematic research in the archives, which, as has been noted, were probably stored in a way that made finding earlier records largely a matter of chance.[85]

Locating the right books also required some luck. We have seen that the imperial library was probably so disorganized that even Theodore Daphnopates, Symeon the Logothete, John Scylitzes, and Constantine VII's researchers failed to find some relevant books there.[86] Even well-known books could be hard to find. To take one significant example, Procopius' *Wars* was the most popular and most readily available early Byzantine history, if we are to judge from the manuscripts still extant, and at least eight middle Byzantine historians made use of it.[87] Because of its size, the *Wars* was as a rule copied into two separate manuscript volumes, the first containing Books I–IV and the second Books V–VIII. Among middle Byzantine historians, only Constantine VII's researchers seem to have found both volumes. Apparently Tarasius, Theophanes, Photius, Daphnopates, Leo the Deacon, and Choniates used only the first volume, and Cinnamus only the second.[88] The first volume may have been more common because people would naturally have tended to start reading Procopius' work at the beginning, and to acquire just the first volume if they could afford only one.[89] While some historians may well have seen both volumes of the *Wars*, none apart from Constantine VII's researchers appears to have had both on hand when he wrote. One would, however, have expected all these historians, except perhaps for Theophanes, to have been able to work in the imperial library, which should have had both volumes. Those who did research in other libraries would have had still more trouble finding what they wanted.

83 See above, pp. 16 (Trajan), 21 (Tarasius?), 45 (George Syncellus), 168–69, 172–73, and 193 (Theodore Daphnopates?), 381 (Anna), and 443–44 (Nicetas Choniates).

84 Psellus, *Chronography* I.31.

85 See above, pp. 6 and n. 23 (on the archives) and 21 (on Tarasius).

86 See above, pp. 162 (Constantine VII's researchers) and 335 (Scylitzes).

87 See Treadgold, *Early Byzantine Historians*, pp. 371–73. Colonna, *Storici*, p. 109, lists fifty-four MSS of the *Wars*.

88 See above, pp. 20 and n. 82 (Tarasius[?], referring to Book II), 68 (Theophanes, referring only to Books I–IV), 176 and n. 87 (Daphnopates[?], referring only to Books III–IV), 243 and n. 68 (Leo the Deacon, referring only to Books I–IV), 415 and n. 130 (Cinnamus, referring only to Books V and VIII), and 448 and n. 164 (Nicetas Choniates, referring only to Books I and IV). Note that Photius, *Bibliotheca* cod. 63, summarizes only Books I and II; though he claims to have read all eight books and his summary ends with a lacuna (see Treadgold, *Nature*, p. 79), he may have summarized only the first volume.

89 The fact that today we have more MSS of the second volume (33) than of the first (21) illustrates that the preservation of MSS can vary over time for reasons that are difficult to determine.

Under the circumstances, even though the middle Byzantine historians wrote mostly derivative works about the times before their own, those who wrote contemporary histories had distinct advantages. Most of the contemporary historians, like Thucydides and Xenophon before them, had been well placed to know the main political events of their times and were well acquainted with others who knew still more. All things being equal, the classical historians' idea that the best man to record events was a participant in them had much to recommend it. Psellus, Anna, Attaliates, Choniates, and some others have accordingly left us animated and largely reliable pictures of the politics of their times. Our knowledge of the warfare of those times has suffered somewhat from their lack of military experience and interests, especially in comparison with Thucydides, Xenophon, Ammianus, or Procopius. Nonetheless, Anna, Attaliates, and Cinnamus, by drawing on their own experience and that of their informants, managed to write competent accounts of a number of battles and campaigns. Our knowledge of the middle Byzantine Church is also limited because, in comparison with the church historians of the earlier period, few authors of surviving middle Byzantine contemporary histories were active churchmen. Our knowledge of the Church would probably be improved if we had the complete histories of Nicetas the Paphlagonian, Theodore of Sebastea, and Demetrius of Cyzicus. For most purposes, however, the middle Byzantine histories are as informative and perceptive as those of earlier Byzantine times.

The historiography

Arbitrary though historical divisions usually are, the time from the late seventh century to the early thirteenth was a distinct period in the development of Byzantine historiography. The seventh century, with the loss of Egypt, Syria, Armenia, and most of the Balkans, brought drastic changes in the empire's administration, education, society, and culture. The class of decurions, which had produced many earlier historians, finally vanished. The central bureaucracy, which had produced some other earlier historians, shrank and was reorganized. The institutions of higher learning that had trained many earlier historians disappeared, and the secondary schools that had taught almost all historians to read and write classical and classicizing Greek became fewer and worse. Moreover, potential historians were uncertain what to write, because they could not know the outcome of the empire's current military crises and political upheavals. These shocks are reflected in the seventy-five-year gap in Byzantine historiography between the continuation of John of Antioch around 645 and the history of Trajan the Patrician around 720. Trajan is the only Byzantine historian known to have written during the 135 years between 645 and 780. This was a dramatic break, because throughout the whole Byzantine period historians appeared at an average rate of around one every eleven years. Such an interruption seems to have been unprecedented in Greek historiography since Herodotus. The seventh-century division between the early and middle periods of Byzantine historiography is not artificial.

The fall of Constantinople in 1204 to the army of the Fourth Crusade also brought drastic changes. The empire lost its capital altogether, as had not happened in the seventh century. This time the central bureaucracy, which had employed most of the middle Byzantine historians, was dissolved, and the state archives and many books and libraries were destroyed. The secondary schools that had trained historians also disappeared, along with the relatively small institutions of higher learning that had trained some historians and employed several others. The Byzantine successor states gradually developed new bureaucracies and schools, but on a far smaller scale than those of the empire before 1204. Once again, potential historians were uncertain what to write. Besides having no idea what would happen next, they had lost their main subject, the Empire of the Romans, unless they could convince themselves that it was being reconstituted in Nicaea, Trebizond, or Epirus. Nicetas Choniates seems to have left his history unfinished in despair. No event between the seventh century and 1204 had caused nearly so much trauma to the Byzantines or to Byzantine historiography. Although one may make a case for using other dates to define periods in the history of the Byzantine state and society, the seventh century and 1204 clearly define a period in Byzantine historiography that was distinct from what came earlier or later.

Between the seventh century and the Fourth Crusade Byzantine historiography naturally underwent a course of change and development. On the whole it can be considered a course of improvement, in the sense that histories tended to become longer, more widely read, more sophisticated, and better written. After Trajan the Patrician revived contemporary Byzantine historiography with his *Concise Chronicle* around 720, Tarasius apparently continued Trajan's work with another short history to 781. With the restoration of the icons in 787, Nicephorus' *Concise History* and the *Great Chronography* revived the practice of compiling histories of earlier times from previous histories. This sort of historiography was brought to a much more advanced level by the remarkable world chronicle mostly compiled by George Syncellus and completed by Theophanes in 814. In all, the thirty-five years of the first restoration of the icons between 780 and 815 generated an impressive total of seven histories by iconophile writers who were evidently trying to repair what they saw as the damage done by Iconoclasm to Byzantine knowledge of the past. For some three centuries George and Theophanes enjoyed reputations as Byzantium's foremost world historians, and their works exercised a powerful influence on the many world histories that were written after them.

After the return of Iconoclasm in 815, Theognostus the Grammarian seems to have summarized Theophanes' history to remove its iconophile views, then to have continued it until 829 without either criticizing Iconoclasm or strongly defending it. Sergius Confessor, having been exiled as an iconophile in 833, attempted to write a continuation of Nicephorus' *Concise History* from an iconophile point of view but died before he could finish his work. Meanwhile the less staunch iconophile Ignatius the Deacon made a modest contribution to reviving the history of literature by preparing a biographical dictionary of authors up to himself. After the second restoration of the icons, in 843, Photius produced a more comprehensive

if quite haphazard history of literature in his monumental *Bibliotheca*. Otherwise the historiography of the seventy years after 843 was unremarkable, represented only by the lost Continuation of Theophanes from 829 to 844, and the primarily theological *Concise Chronicle* of George the Monk. The next contemporary history seems to have been the lost History of Basil I and Leo VI, written around 913. It was followed around 921 by the uneven and polemical *Secret History* of Nicetas the Paphlagonian, which was also eventually lost, though it had substantial influence on subsequent histories of the years from 813 to 921 and survived into the fourteenth century.

After an interval of thirty years or so when historiography was dormant, in the second half of the tenth century it revived under the patronage of Constantine VII (945–59), who himself supervised the preparation of his massive *Historical Excerpts*. The emperor also commissioned three histories that together continued Theophanes' account up to 886: Joseph Genesius' *Reigns* and the *Life of Basil* and *Theophanes Continuatus*, both probably written by Theodore Daphnopates. Manuel the Protospatharius seems then to have incorporated these works into a history continuing Theophanes until 948. Constantine VII had also patronized Symeon the Logothete, who around 968 compiled the two editions of his mostly derivative world history, the second edition extending to 963. Symeon the Logothete may also have sponsored the much-expanded version of his work that we call Pseudo-Symeon. An historian who was probably Nicephorus the Deacon composed a contemporary history around 971, while a more derivative history of the years from 959 to 976 was prepared by Leo the Deacon around 995. Around the same date, Theodore of Side compiled a mostly derivative history to continue Theophanes to 976, which was later continued to 1025 by his nephew Theodore of Sebastea. Theodore of Sebastea's history was in its turn continued by Demetrius of Cyzicus around 1043 and John the Monk around 1058. Until this point, middle Byzantine histories formed a large body of competent work, but none that was truly outstanding.

Soon after John the Monk, around 1062, Michael Psellus composed a strikingly different kind of contemporary history in his *Chronography*, a penetrating memoir of the many emperors he had served, for which he wrote a continuation in 1074. Meanwhile Michael Attaliates wrote a creditable though less brilliant contemporary history of his own in two editions, around 1075 and 1079. Then John Scylitzes produced a comprehensive summary of contemporary histories that covered the years from 813 to 1079, and George Cedrenus combined Scylitzes' work with that of Pseudo-Symeon. Though Nicephorus Bryennius failed to finish his contemporary history before he died in 1138, his widow, Anna Comnena, superseded his work with her admirable *Alexiad* before her death around 1153. Nicephorus and Anna belonged to an important group who wrote histories in the middle of the twelfth century, including the world historians John Zonaras, Constantine Manasses, and Michael Glycas and the contemporary historians John Cinnamus and Eustathius of Thessalonica. Finally Nicetas Choniates composed the last and in some ways the best of the middle Byzantine histories in four versions between 1202 and his death in 1217.

The reasons middle Byzantine historiography developed as it did may become clearer if the original histories and derivative histories are considered separately. The derivative histories, most of which reached recent times after beginning either with the Creation or with the end of Theophanes' history in 813, were mostly written to supersede one another. The first derivative histories of the period, dating from the revival of learning after the first phase of Iconoclasm, were the lost *Great Chronography* of around 787 and the chronological tables and *Concise History* of Nicephorus around 791. Some twenty years later, evidently finding these works too short and uncritical, George Syncellus, assisted by Theophanes, replaced them with a comprehensive and explicitly iconophile history that found a lasting place in Byzantine scholarship. Around 832 Theognostus the Grammarian apparently condensed and continued Theophanes' history to make it acceptable to iconoclasts. Since iconophiles found Theognostus' work unsatisfactory, an epitomator of Theophanes prepared his own iconophile condensation and continuation of Theophanes to 829 around 850. Apparently finding this version insufficiently didactic and theological, around 875 George the Monk composed his *Concise Chronicle*, a new iconophile version of world history to 843. Around 921 Nicetas the Paphlagonian produced his own idiosyncratic world chronicle, the *Secret History*, to denounce what he thought were betrayals of Christian principles, especially by Patriarch Photius and Emperor Leo VI.

In the mid-tenth century, Constantine VII's researchers took a more scholarly approach to world history in compiling both the *Historical Excerpts* and their three composite histories extending from 813 to 886. Since they neglected to bring their work fully up to date, Manuel the Protospatharius summarized and continued it to 948. Because Manuel had begun only with 813 and Theophanes with 284, Symeon the Logothete and Pseudo-Symeon made the work of Theophanes and Manuel into a world history by extending it back to the Creation and forward to 963. Perhaps feeling that other recent histories were too long, Theodore of Side wrote another continuation of Theophanes until 976. Around 1095, when earlier world histories were more than a century out of date, John Scylitzes prepared yet another account of the period after Theophanes, summarizing contemporary histories first until 1057 and then until 1079. Since Scylitzes' version was still not a world history, because it began only with 813, George Cedrenus made it into a world history by adding the part of Pseudo-Symeon up to 813. For more critical readers of world history, around 1145 John Zonaras compiled a more comprehensive world history from a better selection of sources. For less critical readers, Constantine Manasses composed his verse chronicle, and Michael Glycas his moralizing version.

When we turn from derivative works to original ones, we find that most of the events of Byzantine history from 645 to 1206 were originally recorded in segments by single contemporary historians. These contemporary historians appeared at intervals, often a generation or two after the last contemporary historian had written, when the intervening events were in danger of being forgotten. We are fortunate that the continuation of John of Antioch extended to 645, because Trajan the Patrician wrote his original account of the years from 629 to

720 somewhat too late, when the earliest events, even some that were later than 645, had already passed out of living memory. Tarasius appears to have written his continuation of Trajan from 721 to 781 just in time. For the years from 781 to 813, our main source is the account apparently written by George Syncellus and copied by Theophanes. Our best information on the period from 813 to 829 seems to derive from the contemporary history of Theognostus the Grammarian, since we have no more than fragments of the history from 769 to 828 by Sergius Confessor. For the years from 829 to 844 the anonymous Continuation of Theophanes from 829 to 844 provided crucial information, because no other contemporary history seems to have been written at the time.

For the period after the restoration of the icons in 843, our surviving sources show dependence on the anonymous History of Basil and Leo to 912 and on the *Secret History* of Nicetas the Paphlagonian to 921. Yet neither of those authors was very well informed about the period soon after 844, which was well in the past when they wrote. Our best information on the years between 921 and 948 appears to come from Manuel the Protospatharius, and for the years between 948 and 971 from Nicephorus the Deacon; both Manuel and Nicephorus seem to have been contemporary historians writing within forty years of the events they recorded. Our scanty knowledge of the eventful years from 971 to 976 can be blamed on Theodore of Side and Leo the Deacon, who were both past childhood at the time but appear to have been nearly helpless when they lacked written sources. The defects of Theodore of Sebastea's short contemporary account of the period from 976 to 1025 have already been noted. The contemporary accounts of Demetrius of Cyzicus from 1025 to 1043 and of John the Monk from 1025 to 1057 seem to have been rather longer and more detailed than Theodore of Sebastea's work.

By this time, however, we have the splendid contemporary history of Michael Psellus from 976 to 1074. Though Psellus' knowledge is understandably limited before 1028, later on his insight into the ruling circles he knew well is invaluable. We also have the knowledgeable contemporary history of Michael Attaliates from 1034 to 1079, which largely overlaps with Psellus' work. From 1070 to 1080 we have the partly original and quite competent history of Nicephorus Bryennius, and from 1071 to 1118 we have the mostly original, well-researched, and thoroughly intelligent *Alexiad* of Anna Comnena. John Zonaras' short account of the years from 1081 to 1118 is also valuable as a more critical corrective to Anna's highly favorable view of Alexius I. After 1118 we have the contemporary history of John Cinnamus until 1176 (originally until 1180) and the different versions of the contemporary history of Nicetas Choniates until 1206, another insightful account by a high-ranking official.

The contemporary accounts beginning with Psellus' *Chronography* differ from the earlier ones in several ways. First, Psellus' and his successors' reports on their times are generally better informed, more detailed, and more incisive than the earlier contemporary accounts seem to have been. Second, for most of the eleventh and twelfth centuries we have more than one independent contemporary source, as is very rarely the case for the seventh through tenth centuries. Another striking difference is that all the contemporary accounts by Psellus and the historians after him

are substantially preserved today, while all but one of the significant contemporary accounts before Psellus are lost to us in their original form. The one earlier account that survives is the short concluding supplement to Theophanes' chronicle, which Theophanes seems to have copied from a narrative by George Syncellus. Part of the reason for this difference in preservation before and after Psellus is presumably that all kinds of middle Byzantine histories starting with Psellus are substantially preserved. On the other hand, about half of all histories before Psellus are also preserved, but only one out of seventeen of the contemporary accounts is among them. Moreover, the contemporary accounts of Psellus and his successors mostly survive in very few manuscripts. Evidently few Byzantines read the contemporary accounts before Psellus, and not many more read the later ones.

We should not, however, simply conclude that the Byzantines thought world histories were more important than contemporary histories. Like most readers up to the present, Byzantine readers did not necessarily read the books that they most admired. No educated Byzantine would have thought that George the Monk or Constantine Manasses was a greater writer than Psellus or Nicetas Choniates, just as no Byzantine would have thought that a convenient summary of biblical history was more praiseworthy than the Bible itself. For educated Byzantines, Thucydides was the greatest historian, the only historian taught at school, and in a different class from mere compilers like Diodorus Siculus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, or Dio Cassius. We can gather something about the opinion Psellus had of derivative histories by looking at his own *Concise History*, a work so slipshod that it seems to show contempt for the whole genre. Many Byzantines respected the scholarship of careful and detailed derivative histories like those of George Syncellus, Theophanes, and Zonaras, which were considered important to read for the information they contained. Yet an original contemporary history, if well done, was literature of a higher order, because it fulfilled the historian's duty to preserve the memory of events that would otherwise have been lost to future generations. Derivative world histories at best made what was already preserved more easily accessible, because the duty of a derivative historian was to add nothing of his own, except perhaps a better prose style.

Thus the most gifted Byzantine historians were almost always contemporary historians, like Ammianus and Procopius in the earlier period. Psellus' prose may have been too difficult for many Byzantine readers, but Psellus enjoyed wide respect among the well-educated as a scholar and as a writer. His *Chronography* strongly influenced not just Anna Comnena and Nicetas Choniates but Nicephorus Bryennius and John Zonaras, and it had some impact on Attaliates, Scylitzes, and Glycas. What had evidently changed by the middle of the eleventh century is that the audience for secular literature had grown just large enough, and refined enough, both to attract gifted writers to contemporary history and to allow their works to be read and copied enough to reach us.[90] In the ninth century, Photius

[90] Cf. Mango, *Byzantium*, pp. 237–38: "We are greatly indebted to the small band of educated civil servants and clergymen who presided over the transmission of the antique heritage in the ninth and tenth centuries, but we cannot describe them as constituting a

had the talent needed to write a formal history, but he lacked a sufficient readership for such a work. He therefore wrote his *Bibliotheca* in the form of a long letter to his favorite brother, which must then have been circulated among a few friends.[91] In the eleventh century, Psellus may have written his *Chronography* in the first place because Constantine X had asked for it, but once it was written it found a certain number of readers.[92] They included Anna Comnena and Nicetas Choniates, whom it inspired to write contemporary histories of their own.[93]

The question of the relative popularity of different Byzantine histories is a vexed one, because the best indicator available to us, the number of our surviving manuscripts, has serious defects. Our sample of some six hundred manuscripts containing middle Byzantine histories is relatively small, and includes post-Byzantine manuscripts and manuscripts of only parts or summaries of histories.[94] Yet late manuscripts must have been copied from earlier manuscripts, and the existence of manuscripts of parts or summaries of histories shows at least some degree of interest in their contents. While the overwhelming majority of our manuscripts date from after the Fourth Crusade, the works that existed in the largest number of copies in 1204 were presumably those most likely to survive the disaster, and relatively few works seem to have been lost in the subsequent period. Nevertheless, realizing that the preservation of manuscripts depends partly on chance, we should be careful not to attach much importance to small differences in numbers of manuscripts. We can, however, reasonably suppose that a history now preserved in fifty manuscripts was read by more Byzantines than a history now preserved in one manuscript, or none.

A half-dozen middle Byzantine histories appear in more than forty of our manuscripts. The most common, in almost a hundred manuscripts, is the popularizing

sufficient forum for the production of a literature whose aim was to entertain and to please. … Only when the cities revived in about the eleventh century were more favourable conditions once again introduced: this is fully confirmed by the writings that have come down to us. … We should not imagine, of course, that this new public was either large or that it extended beyond the major centres of Constantinople and Thessalonica."

[91] Cf. my remarks in Treadgold, "Photius," p. 16: "Literature needs an audience. A Byzantine who expected to reach a hundred or more people in a dozen or more places needed to write something and have it copied. … But a Byzantine who expected to reach fewer than fifty people in a single city might not bother to circulate copies of his work; he might simply invite his audience to his house to talk, or at most circulate a single draft of his writing among them. Such was the case in the ninth century for Byzantine secular literature, which interested only a few students, teachers and civil servants in Constantinople."

[92] See above, pp. 290–91 and n. 94.

[93] Cf. Mango, *Byzantium*, p. 246: "It is a sad commentary on the taste of the Byzantine public that [Psellus'] *Chronographia* should have come down to us in a single [complete] manuscript. Yet it was certainly used, even plagiarized, by later historians, notably Bryennius, Anna Comnena and Zonaras. And it may be said that after Psellus the qualities of personal observation and a lifelike portrayal of character were not lost."

[94] Although 635 is the actual total of the numbers of the MSS listed in the table on pp. 490–92 below and compiled from Colonna, *Storici*, a number of those MSS include more than one history. Note that Colonna's listings for early Byzantine histories omit all the church histories, which she intended to include in a second volume that was never published.

world history composed by Constantine Manasses in verse. The second most common is the long and rather scholarly world history of John Zonaras. Next comes the *Concise Chronography* of the patriarch Nicephorus, a collection of short chronological tables going back to Adam that must chiefly have been used as a reference work. The other three histories in this group, in descending order of numbers of manuscripts, are the moralizing world histories of Michael Glycas and George the Monk, and the long but more entertaining world history of George Cedrenus. That all of these are world histories, and as such overwhelmingly derivative, seems to be significant. One may suspect that not just Nicephorus' tables but the other histories were often used as reference works. Nonetheless, many people surely read the works of Manasses and Glycas, which are among the easiest of the middle Byzantine histories to read. The compilations of Zonaras and Cedrenus had much to attract anyone interested in history, and the compilation of George the Monk had much to offer anyone interested in Christian literature.

Another seven middle Byzantine histories are preserved in fewer than forty but more than twenty of our manuscripts. These are remarkably erudite works. The most common of them is the history of Nicetas Choniates in its various versions. Apparently later Byzantines had considerable interest in learning about the disaster that had befallen their empire in 1204, and realized that Nicetas provided the definitive contemporary account. Next in the number of manuscripts come the history of George Syncellus from the Creation to 284, the world history of Symeon the Logothete in its different versions (some ascribed to authors other than Symeon), and Theophanes' continuation of George Syncellus to 813. John Scylitzes' continuation of Theophanes comes next. Probably some educated Byzantines kept the works of George Syncellus, Theophanes, and Scylitzes to make a set comprising all of world history. Surprisingly, the next most common work is Constantine VII's *Historical Excerpts*, chiefly its excerpts on embassies. Last in this group comes John Xiphilinus' Epitome of Cassius Dio. Byzantines who wanted to read Constantine's *Historical Excerpts* and the works of Nicetas Choniates, George Syncellus, Theophanes, Scylitzes, Symeon the Logothete, and Xiphilinus appear likely to have had serious historical interests.

The rest of the middle Byzantine histories are preserved in fewer than twenty manuscripts. In fact, none survives in more than fourteen manuscripts, and only the most common of them, Anna Comnena's *Alexiad*, survives in more than six. We have four to six manuscripts of John Cinnamus' history, the *Life of Basil*, Michael Attaliates' *History*, and the patriarch Nicephorus' *Concise History*. We have three manuscripts each of *Theophanes Continuatus*, the "Chronicle of Monemvasia," Photius' *Bibliotheca*, and the *History* of Leo the Deacon. We have two manuscripts each of Peter of Alexandria's short chronicle, Pseudo-Symeon, the "Chronicle of Cambridge," Genesius' *Reigns*, and Psellus' *Chronography*. Separate manuscripts also include two fragments probably derived from the otherwise lost history of Sergius Confessor. The histories that survive in just one manuscript are the "Chronicle of Brussels," Psellus' *Concise History*, Nicephorus Bryennius' *Material for History*, and Eustathius' *On the Capture of Thessalonica*. One manuscript preserves the few fragments that we have of the *Great Chronography*. This is

obviously a very mixed group, including the masterworks of Photius, Psellus, and Anna, the respectable productions of Leo, Attaliates, and Cinnamus, the official histories of Constantine VII, and some relatively minor chronicles.

Finally we have the histories that have failed to survive in their original form in even a single manuscript. Several of these probably disappeared because their views disturbed Byzantine readers. Theognostus the Grammarian failed to condemn Iconoclasm, as everyone was expected to do. The unknown author of the ninth-century Continuation of Theophanes from 829 to 844 condemned Theoctistus, whom most Byzantines revered for his part in restoring the icons. The unknown author of the History of Basil and Leo criticized Basil I and Leo VI, whom most Byzantines respected as founders of the long-lasting and generally successful Macedonian Dynasty. Nicetas the Paphlagonian condemned not just Leo VI but Photius, who was widely regarded as a saint. Nicephorus the Deacon denounced every emperor of his time but John I, including the generally admired Constantine VII and Nicephorus II. While we cannot confidently say that any of these histories was suppressed, we should not be surprised that few readers wanted to own copies of them, especially because most of the material in them could be found summarized elsewhere in less objectionable form.

Aside from mere chance, which was certainly one factor, the best reason we can give for the disappearance of most of the other lost histories is usually that they were superseded when they were incorporated into later histories. Although the *Suda* praises the history of Trajan the Patrician, and everyone considered the patriarch Tarasius a saint, the histories of Trajan and Tarasius survive only in the form of summaries by Nicephorus and Theophanes. Perhaps all copies of Tarasius' history were destroyed during the second period of Iconoclasm, while later the prestige of the iconophile confessors Nicephorus and Theophanes gave their histories an advantage over Trajan's, which the two of them had summarized. George Syncellus' version of the chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa was incorporated into the histories of George himself and Theophanes but otherwise probably had a very limited circulation. The original version may also have included too much detail about events in Syria to interest most Byzantine readers. Symeon the Logothete summarized and superseded the history of Manuel the Protospatharius. Scylitzes epitomized and superseded the histories of Theodore of Side, Theodore of Sebastea, Demetrius of Cyzicus, and John the Monk. The first three of these seem not to have been particularly distinguished as history or as literature, and even John's history was probably inferior to the excellent treatments of the same period by Psellus and Attaliates.

We may still be struck by the fact that fewer Byzantines seem to have wanted to read the masterful contemporary histories of Psellus, Anna Comnena, and Nicetas Choniates than the derivative and pedestrian world histories of Manasses, Glycas, George the Monk, and Cedrenus. In fact, Choniates' history seems to have been almost as popular as those world chronicles, despite being a contemporary history of a comparatively short period that was composed in quite difficult Greek. The histories of Psellus and Anna were long, densely written, and highly detailed accounts of periods that would have seemed relatively unimportant to Byzantine readers as time went by. Even today, most readers tend to choose what they read

because of their interest in the subject of the book rather than its reputation as a monument of scholarship or literature. If anything, we should admire the sophistication of the unexpectedly large group that was interested in the voluminous and serious histories of John Zonaras and George Syncellus, and in Constantine VII's *Historical Excerpts*. The quality of most middle Byzantine histories, both contemporary and derivative, is quite high. Their authors appear to have tried to live up to the standards set by their predecessors as far back as Thucydides, with considerable success.

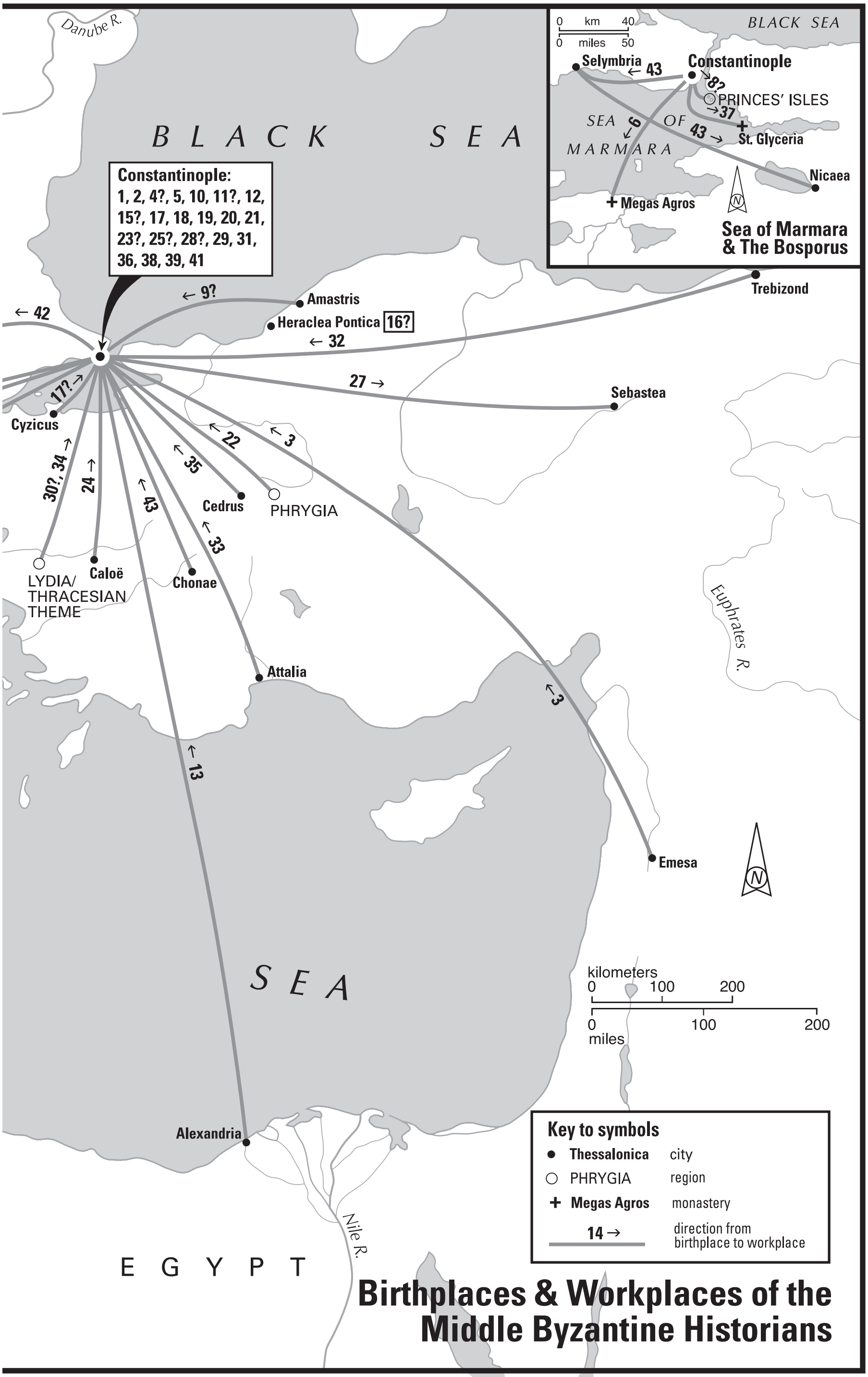
Some modern scholars may still think that instead of the works of Psellus, Anna, and Choniates we should look at the popularizing histories of Manasses and Glycas to discover the interests of the ordinary Byzantine. Ordinary Byzantines, however, read nothing whatever, because they were illiterate. Even Byzantines with a primary education were unlikely to read any historical book but the Bible, because they would have found histories of any other kind too expensive to buy and too difficult to read. The fairly short and readable histories of Manasses and Glycas would have appealed above all to Byzantines with a secondary education who were not much interested in history but thought they ought to know something about it. Since Manasses and Glycas themselves were more sophisticated than most of their readers, the ideas of those authors were not necessarily shared by their audience, except of course for ideas shared by nearly all Byzantines, like the main tenets of orthodox Christianity. To look in histories for the interests of Byzantines who had little interest in history is pointless. All the histories are evidence mainly for the interests of a modest-sized elite who took history seriously, liked to read it, and sometimes wrote it.

Many middle Byzantine histories seem to show that their authors were not merely serious but pessimistic. Most were critical of even the best of their emperors and patriarchs. The iconophile historians cared more about denouncing iconoclasts than about celebrating the restoration of icons. When Byzantium began to win military victories and to expand in all directions, few historians wrote about the triumphs of Nicephorus II, John I, and Basil II. In fact, few middle Byzantine historians were much interested in military history at all. Anna Comnena, a partial exception, celebrated her father's incomplete restoration of a severely damaged empire during a reign considered calamitous by Alexius himself, whose achievements even Anna claimed were undone by his successors.[95] The subjects that inspired the best efforts of Psellus and Nicetas Choniates were the failures of a series of mediocre or incompetent rulers that led gradually but ineluctably to disaster. Pessimistic Byzantine historians had good classical models—Thucydides and Xenophon had taken the downfall of Athens and Sparta as their themes—but middle Byzantine historians could also have found models for more optimistic views of history in Herodotus, Polybius, and Plutarch, and even in Procopius. Yet by the time when Byzantine culture had progressed enough to produce truly great historians, the empire was already in terrible danger, as its great historians were perceptive enough to see.

[95] Comnena XV.11.1 and XIV.3.8.



Map 2 Birthplaces and workplaces of the middle Byzantine historians



Birthplaces & Workplaces of the Middle Byzantine Historians

Chronological Table of the Middle Byzantine Historians

The historians are arranged in the order of the known or conjectural date of appearance of their first historical work.

Symbols used in this table are as follows:

***Over 90 percent of work probably survives.
**Between 50 and 90 percent of work probably survives.
*Some but less than 50 percent of work survives.
(0/2) Numbers of substantially complete/incomplete manuscripts of original work that survive (excluding later works copied from it).[1]

1. Trajan the Patrician (c. 665–after c. 720)
   c. 720 *Concise Chronicle***
2. Tarasius(?) (c. 750?–806)
   c. 781 Continuation of the *Concise Chronicle* of Trajan the Patrician**
3. George Syncellus (c. 745–c. 813)
   c. 783 Translation and continuation of the chronicle of Theophilus of Edessa(?)**
   c. 813 *Selection of Chronography**** (9/25)
4. Anonymous (d. after c. 787?)
   c. 787? *Great Chronography*, Books I–VIII(?)* (0/1)[2]
5. Nicephorus (c. 758–828)
   c. 791? *Concise History**** (1/3)
   c. 791? *Concise Chronography* (first edition)***
   c. 821 *Concise Chronography* (second edition)*** (45/23)
6. Theophanes Confessor (759/60–818)
   c. 815 *Chronography**** (14/18)
7. Theognostus the Grammarian (c. 780?–after c. 832)
   c. 832 History*
8. Sergius Confessor(?) (c. 795–c. 835)
   c. 835 History (*Scriptor Incertus*)* (0/2)[3]
9. Ignatius the Deacon (c. 775–after c. 847)
   c. 835 Epitome of the *Name-Finder* of Hesychius (first edition)**
   c. 845 Epitome of the *Name-Finder* of Hesychius (second edition)**
10. Photius (c. 813–after 892)
    845 *Bibliotheca**** (3/0)[4]
11. Anonymous (c. 810?–after c. 860?)
    c. 850 Epitome and Continuation of Theophanes to 829**
    c. 860 Continuation of the Epitome of Theophanes from 829 to 844**
12. George the Monk (c. 830?–after c. 875?)
    c. 875? *Concise Chronicle**** (20/33)

[1] These numbers of manuscripts are based on the lists in Colonna, *Storici*, except when otherwise indicated in a footnote.
[2] See above, pp. 31–35.
[3] See above, pp. 94–98.
[4] Colonna, *Storici*, lists these only as the most important manuscripts.

13. Peter of Alexandria (c. 870?–after c. 900)
    c. 900 *Brief Survey of the Times from Adam to the Present**** (2/0)[5]
14. Arethas of Patras(?) (c. 849?–after 932)
    c. 900? "Chronicle of Monemvasia"*** (3/0)[6]
15. Anonymous (c. 840?–after c. 913)
    c. 913 History of Basil I and Leo VI*
16. Nicetas the Paphlagonian(?) (c. 860?–after c. 921?)
    c. 921 *Secret History*, Books I–II*
17. Theodore Daphnopates(?) (c. 900–after c. 962)
    c. 950 *Life of Basil**** (4/0)[7]
    c. 958 *Theophanes Continuatus*, Books I–IV*** (3/0)
18. Joseph Genesius (c. 910–after c. 969?)
    c. 954 *On Imperial Reigns*, Books I–IV*** (1/1)
19. Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (905–959)
    c. 958 (editor) *Historical Excerpts* (*Excerpta*), "subjects" I–LIII* ("On Embassies of the Romans to Foreigners" and "On Embassies of Foreigners to the Romans" [10/8], "On Plots against Monarchs"[0/3], "On Proverbial Teachings"[0/1], "On Virtue and Vice"[0/1])
20. Manuel the Protospatharius (c. 910?–after c. 962)
    c. 962 History, Books I–VIII*
21. Symeon the Logothete (c. 925–c. 990)
    c. 968 Chronicle (first edition)*** (7/18)[8]
    c. 969 Chronicle (second edition)*** (5/3)[9]
22. Nicephorus the Deacon(?) (c. 925?–after c. 971)
    c. 971 History from 944 to 971**
23. Pseudo-Symeon (d. after c. 978)
    c. 978 Chronicle*** (2/0)[10]
24. Leo the Deacon (c. 950–c. 997?)
    c. 995 *History*, Books I–X*** (2/1)
25. Theodore of Side (c. 945?–after 997?)
    c. 995? History from 811 to 976?*
26. Anonymous (d. after 999)
    999 "Chronicle of Cambridge"*** (2/0)

[5] Colonna, *Storici*, p. 98, includes a Dresden manuscript that was destroyed during World War II. (See Hunger, *Hochsprachliche profane Literatur* I, p. 360.)

[6] Those who believe that John Caminiates was an authentic historian (as I do not; see above, pp. 121–23) may add here:

14a. John Caminiates (c. 870–after c. 904)
    c. 904 *On the Capture of Thessalonica**** (7/0)

[7] Some modern editors have also called this text *Theophanes Continuatus*, Book V.

[8] Based on Wahlgren, *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon*, pp. 28*–42* (which supersedes Colonna, *Storici*, for Symeon). This text was formerly attributed to Leo Grammaticus or Theodosius Melissenus (or "Theodosius Melitenus"), and part of it has also been known incorrectly as *Georgius Monachus Continuatus* (ed. separately by Bekker and by Istrin).

[9] Based on Wahlgren, *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon*, pp. 43*–45* (which supersedes Colonna, *Storici*, for Symeon). Some modern editors have also called parts of this text *Theophanes Continuatus* Book VI and *Georgius Monachus Continuatus* (ed. separately by Bekker and by Istrin), though in fact Symeon composed it independently of both *Theophanes Continuatus* and George the Monk's *Concise Chronicle*.

[10] Based on Wahlgren, *Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chronicon*, p. 46* (which supersedes Colonna, *Storici*, for Pseudo-Symeon).

27. Theodore of Sebastea (c. 965?–c. 1029?)
    c. 1027 History of Basil II**
28. Anonymous (d. after c. 1040)
    c. 1040 "Chronicle of Brussels"*** (1/0)
29. Demetrius of Cyzicus (before 998–after c. 1043?)
    c. 1043? History*
30. John the Monk of Lydia (?) (c. 1000?–after c. 1058?)
    c. 1058? History**
31. Michael Psellus (1018–78?)
    c. 1061 *Concise History**** (1/0)
    c. 1062 *Chronography*, Books I–VII*** (1/1)
    1074 *Chronography*, continuation of Book VII*** (1/1)
32. John Xiphilinus the Younger (c. 1050?–after 1082?)
    c. 1073 *Epitome of Cassius Dio**** (11/10)
33. Michael Attaliates (c. 1020–1084/85)
    c. 1075 *History* (first edition)***
    c. 1079 *History* (second edition)*** (1/3)
34. John Scylitzes (c. 1040–after c. 1105)
    c. 1095 *Synopsis of Histories**** (13/0)
    c. 1105 *Epitome of History* (second edition of *Synopsis*, including *Scylitzes Continuatus*)*** (10/9)
35. George Cedrenus (c. 1050?–after c. 1115?)
    c. 1115? *Compendium of Histories**** (9/31)
36. Nicephorus Bryennius (c. 1082–1138)
    1138 *Material for History*, Books I–IV*** (1/1)[11]
37. John Zonaras (c. 1074–after c. 1145)
    c. 1145 *Epitome of Histories*,[12] Books I–II*** (15/64)[13]
38. Constantine Manasses (c. 1125–c. 1187)
    c. 1150 *Chronological Synopsis**** (69/29)
39. Anna Comnena (1083–c. 1153)
    c. 1153 *Alexiad*, Books I–XV*** (6/8)
40. Michael Glycas (Sicidites?) (c. 1130–after c. 1200?)
    c. 1170 *Chronicle*, Parts I–IV*** (31/29)
41. John Cinnamus (1143/44–after 1185)
    c. 1181 *Roman History*,[14] Books I–II** (5/1)
42. Eustathius of Thessalonica (c. 1115–1195/96)
    1186 *Report on the Capture of Thessalonica**** (1/0)
43. Nicetas Choniates (c. 1156–1217)[15]
    c. 1202 *History*, Books I–XVI (first edition)***
    c. 1206 *History*, Books I–XVIII (second edition)***
    c. 1211 *History*, Books XVII–XX (third edition)***
    c. 1217 *Chronological Narrative*, Books I–XIX (fourth edition)*** (11/25)[16]

[11] For the incomplete MS, see Failler, "Texte."

[12] Note that the editions' division into eighteen books is not original.

[13] See P. Leone, "Tradizione."

[14] Note that the editions' division into seven books is not original but is based on ambiguous indications in the MS.

[15] Note that the numbers of the twenty books are not original, though they are based on divisions made by the author.

[16] This is the total number of MSS, several of which combine material from more than one edition; see Dieten, *Nicetae Choniatae Historia* I, pp. vii–ci, with his stemma on p. ci.

List of English Translations of the Middle Byzantine Historians

The following are the best English translations known to me of the middle Byzantine historians. If an historian does not appear here, I am unaware of any published English translation of his text. Note that these translations sometimes differ significantly from my own translations in this book.

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